Knowledge Mobilization in 2032
Building future-ready professional education networks
This custom forecast report and toolkit, Knowledge Mobilization in 2032, was produced by Institute for the Future (IFTF) and funded by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. The views expressed are those of the author(s) and should not be attributed to the foundation.

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Special Thanks

Alan Daly | Professor and Director of Educational Leadership Programs, University of California, San Diego
Nonny de la Peña | Founding Director, Narrative and Emerging Media, Arizona State University
Katherine Haynes | MBA, Senior Program Officer, California Health Care Foundations
Claudine James | NBCT, Arkansas Middle School English Language Arts Educator
An Xiao Mina | Co-Author, Hanmoji Handbook
Nick Monaco | Chief Innovation Officer and Director of China Research, Miburo Solutions
Curtis Ogden | Senior Associate, Interaction Institute for Social Change
Brian Stillwell | Movement Coordination Director, Sunrise Movement

Participating Professional Education Networks

100Kin10
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD)
Aspen Institute Education & Society Program
Association of Latino Administrators and Superintendents (ALAS)
Benjamin Banneker Association, Inc.
Big Picture Learning
California Mathematics Project
Education Resource Strategies
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Grassroots Workshops

Math Circle Network
Mission Wired
MSAN Consortium
National Alliance of Black School Educators
National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP)
National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP)
National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM)
National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships
NCSM: Leadership in Mathematics Education
Technical Education Research Centers (TERC)

Acknowledgements

Authors: Ben Hamamoto, Daria Lamb, Sara Skvirsky, and Lir Wang
Editor: Mark Frauenfelder
Executive Producer: Jean Hagan
Design and Production: Robin Bogott, Karin Lubeck, Colleen O’Connor
IFTF Contributors: Julie Ericsson, Ayca Guralp, Sabrina Howard, Charles Tsai, Kathi Vian

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INTRODUCTION TO KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

Recent years have seen a significant change in the way people accessing information support their professional development. Disruptions around the world have affected traditional methods of accessing, processing, and communicating knowledge. As in-person conferences disappeared, would-be attendees lost learning and networking opportunities.

Education has been among the hardest-hit by the loss of traditional support systems. Besides dealing with Covid-19’s effects, teachers, superintendents, district supervisors, state oversight officials, and others had to deal with a variety of challenges, including distance learning, raging cultural wars, mental health crises, faltering trust, climate chaos, and technological change. Their problems lacked time-tested solutions, and they missed opportunities to work together to resolve them. Those challenges have transformed every role in education and will continue to do so.

To help education professionals in the future, we must build resilient networks for knowledge mobilization. How might such a system be built? How might practitioner networks adapt and transform to meet future challenges?

This report will help you start answering these questions. It was written for professional networks that serve education practitioners or any organization seeking to empower others by providing actionable and relevant information.

We began this project by interviewing practitioners and leaders at the school, district, and state levels. Following the initial findings, we conducted complementary desk research on social, technological, and political factors likely to affect educator networks, knowledge transfer, and communication in general. This research led to the identification of experts in relevant fields who provided input in the later stages of the project in a series of design sprints.

This report and toolkit represent the beginnings of this visioning process for how professionals will access knowledge over the coming decade and how professional networks will support their members through new ways of evaluating, personalizing, and delivering that information.
USING THIS REPORT AND TOOLKIT

By understanding how knowledge mobilization in general is changing, you can develop ideas for network models that avoid the obstacles and seize the opportunities that these future changes present. This report features four aspects of possible futures of knowledge mobilization in 2032 using a framework of four Rs developed by Carleton University’s Community First: Impacts of Community Engagement:

- How to **Reach** people
- How to ensure **Relevance**
- How to grow **Relationships**
- How to verify **Results**

The section on each of these aspects includes:

- **Today to Tomorrow**: an introduction to that aspect
- **Three Future Scenarios**: plausible, provocative future possibilities, accompanied by:
  - Signals: real, present-day examples of the scenario
  - Insights for Knowledge Networks: prompts to draw out implications

- **Working with 2032 Scenarios**: simple guidelines for considering their meaning and impact

- **Connecting 2032 to Today’s Strategies**: case studies from today that relate to opportunities of tomorrow

INSIGHT TO ACTION TOOLKIT

Ideal for small-group ideation, this includes a six-step engagement process and working space to apply learning and leverage insights about challenges or opportunities. The goal is to build toward resilience and future-readiness.
TODAY TO TOMORROW

Reaching people has never been easier. Email, text, and social media allow us to reach individuals or huge audiences instantaneously, with everything from simple written messages to rich, high-definition video. Because nearly everyone carries a smartphone now, we’re almost always reachable. And that’s not always a good thing. People are getting burned out from constant connectivity and negotiating the boundaries of digital communication.

How Americans access online content exposes inequities. Lower-income Americans are more likely to rely on a smartphone for connectivity and are less likely to have broadband access or a laptop or desktop computer. Simultaneously, according to 2019 studies, children from low-income families spend more time on screens on average than their more affluent counterparts.

Over the next decade, we will see even more connectivity through even more devices and new technologies. These will provide new opportunities, particularly virtual reality’s unique capacities for embodied communication. Organizations will have to be even more thoughtful and strategic about using mediums and methods to reach audiences while addressing current and future issues of access and equity.
REACH 2032: THREE FUTURE SCENARIOS

1. EVERY ENVIRONMENT A MESSENGER
   Smart spaces that triage information

2. NEW KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FRONTIERS
   Embodied and direct-to-brain tech extends the array of communication options

3. CONNECTIVITY POLITICS
   Fighting for the right to access communication tech—and to avoid it

These scenarios represent plausible views of how knowledge mobilization could change in the next decade. They are not predictions, and they are not the only future possibilities. They were selected for their balance between relevance and provocation in order to push your thinking about knowledge mobilization past current paradigms. They are thought-starters to help you explore a wider range of possibilities for the future of your organization.
EVERY ENVIRONMENT IS A MESSENGER
Smart spaces that triage information

Science fiction predicted a world blanketed in communication tech. Today, your toaster, refrigerator, bathroom mirror and even your couch can communicate with you.

Surprisingly, affluent people often choose devices and smart spaces that triage information for them. Attention once funneled to the phone is now diffused, so people can “disconnect” from unimportant and non-timely information until that information is helpful. This means less information and sensory overload and more distraction-free time with friends and family and dedicated space for focusing on work or learning.

Using devices to control and customize one’s environment for friends, family, work, or learning will continue to be refined. People will continue to pay premiums to filter unwanted information—the smart space equivalent of a pop-up ad or spam email.

SIGNALS / WHERE WE SEE IT TODAY

Designing communication tech that doesn’t distract or disrupt

Calm Technology book offers design principles for non-intrusive tech applications

**WHAT:** Amber Case’s book “Calm Technology” lays out a set of principles for designing tech devices and services that don’t distract or overwhelm users.

**SO WHAT:** Calm technology has surged in popularity as smartphone and social media addictions have entered the public discourse. Because aggressive communication tech can overwhelm and alienate users, new interfaces may be designed using calm tech principles.

Source: https://calmtech.com/

Amber Case

Source: https://calmtech.com/
Micro-podcast for specific room in the home

Chompers is a two-minute program kids can listen to when they brush their teeth

**WHAT:** Gimlet Media created a podcast for children called “Chompers” to instill the habit of brushing their teeth for a full two minutes.

**SO WHAT:** Context-specific media accessed through a smart speaker illuminates opportunities to design content leveraging its unique aspects.

Making donations convenient with a button in the home

Hacked Amazon Dash button for ACLU donations

**WHAT:** Programmer Nathan Pryor hacked an Amazon Dash button so that when he presses it, he automatically sends a $5 donation to the American Civil Liberties Union instead of placing an Amazon product order. He created it as a way of allowing him to take action instead of feeling simply helpless and frustrated when he learned of upsetting events in the news.

**SO WHAT:** Narrow communication devices and channels can help a person take action with minimal effort.

Source: https://www.aclu.org/
WHAT IT MEANS: INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Question “more is better” approaches to engagement

When designing devices for more narrow communication, don’t overwhelm your audience. Think through opportunities for minimally distracting communication. **Do you tend to offer one-size-fits-all content that perhaps deeply satisfies no one? How could it be more targeted?**

Understand unique contexts for messaging

Consider what resources and information people need, in what setting, and via what medium. This requires a deep understanding of your members, the kinds of decisions they need to make and when, and what is going to help them make decisions. **Can you identify key working moments when your members want information from your network and imagine how to best deliver it then?**

Pay attention to time and space

Smart speakers and smartphones are ubiquitous, meaning people often watch or listen to content while commuting or doing chores. Think through unique, specific contexts for informal interaction opportunities. **What types of information might your members want to have on tap during other activities, and is it easy to find and access from your platform?**
NEW KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER FRONTIERS

Embodied and direct-to-brain tech extends the array of communication options

In 2032, options for getting information to people have expanded almost beyond imagination. Embodied communication tech, such as immersive VR and AR and haptics, has come a long way. People can communicate through gesture, body language, and subtle facial expressions remotely in ways that are not possible through text. The affordances of embodied learning can be used for knowledge mobilization.

Of course, more is not always better. People grew tired of early maximalist strategies using the richest medium possible for any communication. Soon, new norms and practices developed for strategically matching the medium to the intended outcome.

Virtually-embodied communication has ushered in revolutionary and experimental communication frontiers. Emerging brain-to-brain and computer-to-brain communication may soon enhance learning, leading some to speculate that an entirely new paradigm is imminent.

Virtually-embodied communication has ushered in revolutionary and experimental communication frontiers. Emerging brain-to-brain and computer-to-brain communication may soon enhance learning, leading some to speculate that an entirely new paradigm is imminent.

2 SIGNALS / WHERE WE SEE IT TODAY

Virtual Reality provides unique communication affordances

Clinical trial results suggest virtual reality can help surgeons and patients build a better relationship prior to procedures.

**WHAT:** A randomized clinical trial that explained surgery procedures to patients using a VR-informed consent process resulted in better comprehension of their condition compared to a control patient group, without documented increases in anxiety or other unintended consequences.

**SO WHAT:** VR has novel knowledge mobilization capabilities. It might be used for better understanding “embodied cognition” and creating new embodied-learning techniques that could be used in both virtual and real life contexts.

Virtual game worlds provide an important new context for communication

Fortnite hosts presentation on systemic racism

WHAT: On July 4, 2020, Fortnite hosted a presentation by Øpus United called We The People. The presentation included conversations between host Van Jones and several prominent Black writers, musicians, activists, and visionaries, in order to raise awareness about systemic racism in America.

SO WHAT: Gaming platforms increasingly are recognized as an important context for reaching youths and young adults.


DARPA funds wireless brain-to-brain communication tech

WHAT: Rice University researchers wirelessly transmitted information through a skull and into brain cells in a petri dish, suggesting that wireless communication between brains could be viable. Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency has awarded them $8 million toward creating a “wireless headset capable of both “reading” and “writing” brain activity.

SO WHAT: This frontier in knowledge transfer and relationship-building already has helped expert pilots transfer some of their abilities to novices, and existing understandings of neuroscience suggest that such technology could artificially induce empathy.

WHAT IT MEANS: INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Develop literacies around tomorrow’s communication tech

While brain-to-brain communication may be far off, there already is substantial virtual reality research on how to get the most from these media. Knowledge networks should keep abreast of these technologies to avoid being left behind when they mature and become mainstream. *How can you encourage your staff and other stakeholders to develop emerging communication technology skills? How can you measure your progress in learning and growing in this new space?*

Be thoughtful about the importance of embodied communication

We all communicate through our bodies. Studies focused on the affordances of VR often contain essential insights about how in-person interactions contrast with remote interactions. Immersive VR requires a participant’s full attention. Users who can’t multitask or check other screens may have a more meaningful interaction. *Which areas of your work would most benefit from embodied communication? What settings might allow you to use an existing VR experience as a sandbox?*
CONNECTIVITY POLITICS

Fighting for the right to access communications technology—and to avoid it

Is internet access a human right? Governments and people today generally agree that it is. Work, school, the medical system, and civic life are so dependent on the internet that most people believe everyone should have access to it.

The scope of that entitlement is not so clear-cut. Despite US programs to provide reliable online access to underserved communities, those programs differ by region. In some places, VR headsets and smart speakers are included. Other places offer little more than a pitifully overloaded public WiFi network. Freemium models are a compromise solution for providing (ostensibly) equitable access. As a result, almost everyone can access communication technology to learn and work in the 2030s, but fewer have a robust set of controls over what kinds of information can reach them. One of the decade’s most contentious debates concerns people’s freedom to disconnect from selected platforms whose values clash with their own.
Pandemic exposes severity—and cost—of digital divide

**WHAT:** An image of kids sitting on the ground outside a Taco Bell, using free WiFi to access virtual school during the pandemic, was a stark visual reminder of the digital divide. An estimated 12 million students (and some teachers) lack reliable online access, which prevents them from participating successfully in distance learning.

**SO WHAT:** The digital divide results in learning gaps that affect minority students disproportionately and may accumulate over time.

Source: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/mar/15/us-students-online-access-internet-pandemic-virtual-learning

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Pandemic exposes digital divide’s effect on learning

**WHAT:** Amazon recently renamed its “special offers” versions of Kindle and Fire Tablet devices, now labelling the discounted devices “ad-supported.” They cost less than the “ad-free” versions, but users are exposed to banner and lock-screen ads.

**SO WHAT:** Today, many video and music streaming services provide both “freemium” ad-supported versions and paid commercial-free versions. Amazon’s devices point to the potential to bring similar dynamics to hardware. While these models do expand access for people with less disposable income, they also foreshadow a future in which information and sensory overload may become an important equity issue.

Source: https://goodereader.com/blog/kindle/amazon-is-transitioning-away-from-special-offers-on-the-kindle
The new “AI eagle eye” anti-cheating system drew ethical criticism of Taiwan’s top-notch university

**WHAT:** Taiwan’s National TsingHua University announced a new AI-based anti-cheating system that uses webcams to identify abnormal facial and eyeball movements during online exams. While the school publicized that it can effectively prevent cheating, the new system drew criticism on multiple fronts.

**SO WHAT:** The integrity (and effectiveness) of remote exams has been an issue for instructors of online classes. Some solutions propose creative test-making that focuses on high-level comprehension and problem solving-skills. Some even argue that information that can be found online is not worth memorizing and testing. Others propose anti-cheating technology, which can raise concerns over privacy infringement, data misuse, inaccurate judgement, and a student’s right to reject such surveillance. The debate will continue as the technology evolves.

WHAT IT MEANS:
INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Understand your stakeholders’ connectivity needs

Think beyond what devices or services your stakeholders have to what they might need. Consider the benefits of embodied communication devices and how you can help them access them. How might you audit both the access to technology and the needs of your members and stakeholders? Who could be your partner in bridging or bypassing a technological divide?

Think about experience, not just access

Providing connected devices or services alone isn’t enough, especially if users must sit through ads or rely on unreliable connections. Provide them with a streamlined experience so they can focus on your content. Which steps or clicks could be eliminated to make life easier for users? How might you improve your current play-testing process?

What walls have you built?

Consider where your offerings might require a paywall, membership fee, or travel fee. Who is excluded? Could you open access to more people? What value could you add by opening access to others?
WORKING WITH 2032 SCENARIOS:

Now that you’ve read the three scenarios, ask the following questions:

What do I like in these futures?
List elements of these scenarios you would like to see become a reality.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

What don’t I like in these futures?
List elements that concern you or that you would not like to see become a reality.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

What can I do in these futures?
List things that your organization could do in these scenarios that you can not do today.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

What can I do about these futures?
List ways you and your organization could bring about or prevent these scenarios.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
The REACH scenarios of 2032 can inform the actions you take today. Our research identified four general strategies for knowledge mobilization that you can pursue now and in the future:

Make it **easy**
- Identify ways to minimize time and effort needed to engage

Be **accountable**
- Be responsive to feedback and take responsibility for outcomes with follow-through

Build **trust**
- Invest in long-term relationships

Create proper **conditions**
- Consider structural factors and audience context as you make changes

Each strategy includes an example of possible actions inspired by a scenario. These strategies are possible ways to respond to the foresight—examples to spark your thinking about what actions to take today.
**Knowledge Mobilization in 2032**

**HOW TO REACH PEOPLE BY MAKING IT EASY**

**Foresight:** New Frontiers of Knowledge Mobilization

**Insight:** Account for people’s cognitive context and meet them where they are; leverage emerging communication tech

**Strategy:** Automate follow-ups to ensure you are being useful

People have a range of cognitive contexts, so it is crucial to follow up to ensure that the knowledge you disseminate is actually utilized. Technologies such as chatbots are available now, and newer technologies for accountability can be planned for tomorrow.

**Example:** To combat “summer melt” (students accepted to college who do not show up in the fall—often low-income students), Georgia State University pioneered engaging students via chatbot to help complete tasks required to start school in the fall. This successful model has been emulated by colleges nationwide.

**HOW TO REACH PEOPLE BY BUILDING TRUST**

**Foresight:** Connectivity politics

**Insight:** Cultivate capacity in your audiences

**Strategy:** Creating trust as soft communication infrastructure

It is easy to identify the physical infrastructure of communication, but it is difficult to spot the social infrastructure, which is equally essential to knowledge mobilization. Identify where your network needs to build trust and credibility, and cultivate it.

**Example:** Color of Change, America’s largest digital racial justice organization, created a “narrative infrastructure” framework to identify physical, social, and economic components needed to improve narratives instead of simply crafting better “messages.” It calls for a more comprehensive, long-term approach for cultivating the networks and relationships needed to ensure those narratives are well received.
HOW TO REACH PEOPLE BY BEING ACCOUNTABLE

**Foresight:** Connectivity politics

**Insight:** Understand the connectivity needs of your stakeholders

**Strategy:** Study on-the-ground experiences of stakeholders

Organizations must understand stakeholder needs in order to meet them with accountability. Outreach and research are keys to understanding and serving them effectively.

**Example:** The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP) commissioned a study titled “The Leaders We Need Now” to understand how global events—the pandemic, a national reckoning with racial and social injustice, a divisive election cycle, and a multitude of severe weather events—were impacting the profession. In addition to sharing the study results outlining principals’ priorities and future needs with school leaders, media, policymakers, and stakeholders, the NAESP used the findings to develop policy recommendations and changed editorial strategy to ensure the most relevant topics were being addressed.

HOW TO REACH PEOPLE BY CREATING CONDITIONS

**Foresight:** New Frontiers of Knowledge Mobilization

**Insight:** Question “more is better” approaches to engagement

**Strategy:** Support existing communication resources and networks

Instead of thinking only about pulling more people and organizations into your networks, find ways to support and grow networks that already exist.

**Example:** Around 2017, the American Institute of Mathematics noticed the emergence of statewide and regional networks of Math Teachers’ Circles (MTCs). In response, it began offering seed grants and training to groups that wanted to begin their own statewide or regional networks. Several have been very successful and have even won multi year grants to support their growth (e.g., the North Carolina Network of Math Teachers’ Circles). By pooling resources across MTCs, local leaders have been able to offer higher-quality programming to their teachers, as well as opportunities for educators to network with each other beyond their immediate locality. Having the support of other regional education leaders also has helped with the long-term sustainability of each local MTC.
TODAY TO TOMORROW

Today, most people experience information overload. The battle for attention is only getting more fierce. If communication isn’t clear about why it is beneficial or compelling, it will be ignored. Effective knowledge mobilization ensures that the information people receive is useful and relevant.

Content creators, advertisers, and journalists use viewer/listener data to determine what content to create and to promote. We’re also seeing evidence that low-tech communication strategies, which rely on local communicators with community credibility, can be just as effective, particularly in areas where it matters most, such as public health and education.

Data-driven actions and low-tech strategies will continue to advance over the next decade, creating new opportunities and challenges for those trying to mobilize knowledge. There will be continued concern about the health of our information ecosystems, as well as the well-being of the people who inhabit them, and people will pursue novel strategies to address both issues at once.
THREE FUTURE SCENARIOS

1. YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD INFLUENCER
   Valuing life experience and identity to find the best communicators in the community

2. SHAPESHIFTING MEDIA
   Communication that dynamically change for the recipient

3. THE COGNITIVE JUSTICE MOVEMENT
   Demanding structural change to level the communication playing field

These scenarios represent plausible views of how knowledge mobilization could change in the next decade. They are not predictions, and they are not the only future possibilities. They were selected for their balance between relevance and provocation in order to push your thinking about knowledge mobilization past current paradigms. They are thought-starters to help you explore a wider range of possibilities for the future of your organization.
In 2032, everyone’s an “influencer,” thanks in part to a couple of startups that got press coverage and funding by promising advertisers they could leverage the “micro-influence” that “everyday” people have within their networks. Their success was short-lived. The companies had tried to create safeguards against users becoming multi level marketers who burned through years of accumulated trust in minutes, but for most users, that’s exactly what happened. The silver lining was the attention that network science suddenly received. Decades of research already had established that affinity matters in building trust and effectively communicating in fields such as health care and education. Most people didn’t know that until the attempted commercialization of affinity brought a lot of attention to those findings. Today, in 2032, people value their micro-influence and use it judiciously. People whose life experiences make them uniquely influential with specific, often hard-to-reach audiences are sought after as master knowledge mobilizers. They are able to make information relevant in ways others can’t. Those with rare identity combinations or life experiences can suddenly find themselves in high demand, much as people with rare blood types are.

**NEW NICHE INFLUENCERS**

Valuing life experience and identity to find the best communicators in the community

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**SIGNALS / WHERE WE SEE IT TODAY**

**New niche influencers leverage authenticity and affinity**

“The Old Gays” represent emerging category of elder granfluencers

**WHAT:** Going by the handle @oldgays, four queer elders have racked up over 7 million followers on TikTok. They represent an emerging category of “granfluencers” who appeal to a broad demographic.

**SO WHAT:** Marketing strategist Rahel Marsie-Hazen pointed to their authenticity and unique life experiences as the key factors that make them trustworthy to younger audiences. She cites, in particular, that two of them survived the AIDS crisis of the 1980s as an important part of their credibility.

Network science identifies surprisingly low-profile nodes of influence

Study of online conversations about breastfeeding finds a lack of clear clues as to who drives engagement

**WHAT:** An analysis of a social network of 10,694 unique users tweeting about breastfeeding over a six-month period found that conversations were dominated by 813 influencers. These influencers were highly diverse in their number of followers, years on Twitter, and professional backgrounds (40% of influencers were from the scientific health community, 54.7% from the lay public).

**SO WHAT:** While the biggest influencers can be identified easily by their staggering follower counts and views, network science can reveal powerful nodes of influence that would otherwise fly under the radar. As this science advances, more sophisticated mechanisms will likely be revealed, allowing for more precise and predictive pinpointing of micro-influence.

Source: [https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8007060/](https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8007060/)

Micro-influencer dynamics and affinity affect more intimate interactions, too

Study finds students more likely to succeed when teachers share their experiences and identity

**WHAT:** A study published in the National Bureau of Economic Research found that “Black students who have at least one Black teacher in elementary school are 13% more likely to graduate high school and 19% more likely to enroll in college than their peers who are not assigned to a Black teacher.”

**SO WHAT:** Student need for teachers with similar experiences and identities may be a factor in the precipitous rise of homeschooling among families of color during the pandemic. Many parents report that the pandemic convinced them to take their kids out of schools that on average do not treat them fairly.

Source: [https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25254/w25254.pdf](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w25254/w25254.pdf)
Affinity can be leveraged for consequential, small-scale, targeted communication

The “health coach” model suggests affinity could be a better hiring criterion than education or experience

**WHAT:** Iora Health, a primary care group focused serving Medicaid patients, developed a highly successful “health-coaching” model to improve outcomes for the most expensive patients battling multiple chronic conditions. It hired service-sector workers from the same community as the patients to coach patients directly.

**SO WHAT:** Iora Health realized it was more effective to teach clinical information to community members working in the service industry than to help doctors develop the cultural literacy and communication skills needed to connect with the patients they served.

Source: https://www.iorahealth.com/

Credible communicators are severely undervalued

Black men in education leadership are projected to “go extinct” within a decade

**WHAT:** The number of Black men in education leadership is declining, and today’s students are seeing fewer role models in their educational settings. According to Men of Color in Education Leadership, if the current trajectory remains unchanged, men of color in education leadership will be extinct by 2030.

**SO WHAT:** Given the research establishing the importance of teachers sharing affinity with their students, these projections suggest vastly diminished educational opportunity for Black students in the coming decade.

Source: https://www.edweek.org/policy-politics/65-years-after-brown-v-board-where-are-all-the-black-educators/2019/05
WHAT IT MEANS: YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD INFLUENCER
INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Create or identify nodes of micro-influence

Influencers with audiences of millions are capable of mobilizing knowledge at an unprecedented scale, but they are difficult to reach and have a brittle relationship with their audiences. In contrast, the networks of “everyday” people are full of micro-influencers whose trust has been earned over a longer period and is more durable. **Who are the micro-influencers in your network, and what role do they play in mobilizing knowledge? How can you help them expand their influence?**

Extend your understanding of “expertise” and “qualifications”

Those with the fewest formal credentials often have unique experiences and in-depth knowledge of community dynamics. Consider ways to identify such individuals, give them roles, and provide them with the support they need to succeed in those roles in a formal or codified manner. **Do your members and your organization define expertise differently?**

Invert your definitions of complementary and essential skills

Traditional expertise and job qualification models often overlook essential characteristics in knowledge mobilization. Despite their importance to knowledge mobilization in fields such as education and medicine, cultural competence and the ability to relate and communicate to a specific audience often are undervalued. These traits often are seen as complements to essential skills and qualifications—“nice to have,” but not necessary. In reality, cultural competence may be the real essential skill, and one that is difficult for people to learn on the job. **What are the underlying or complementary skills needed to thrive in networks or education? How might you bring those to the forefront of conversation?**
SHAPE-SHIFTING MEDIA
Communication that dynamically change for the recipient

As you open a report you need to read, the words on the page start to shift. The writing becomes more engaging. Publishers know your schedule and how much time you have to read. They know the voice you find most compelling, and they know when an infographic is easier to understand than words on a page. It’s always possible to disable the “personalization feature,” and many people do so, particularly to block ads that are a bit too persuasive or information that cites the original source verbatim. In many cases, leaving the feature on feels more pleasant. In addition, since it is the default, it is not usually worth the effort to fiddle with it. Critics of the technology claim that “adaptive media” further alienates people from one another and reduces shared context, while proponents counter that it allows information to reach unreceptive audiences. Another concern is that people who use it seem to absorb content more efficiently and effectively than those who don’t, leading many people to believe that turning off personalization features will prevent them from keeping up. Still, something seems to be getting lost. It could be that having to work for knowledge brings a certain satisfaction.

SIGNALS / WHERE WE SEE IT TODAY

AI software for quickly generating high-quality writing is advancing rapidly

‘Robot-written’ op-ed run in a major publication

WHAT: Last year, The Guardian published an article that was “written by” GPT-3, a language model that uses AI to produce humanlike text. The paper gave the AI a prompt to write a 500 word op-ed about “why humans have nothing to fear from AI” and gave the program the first four sentences of the article. The resulting text was largely coherent and engaging and, according to the editors, “took less time to edit than many human op-eds.”

SO WHAT: While the AI functioned much more like an auto-complete on steroids than an author, it can imitate specific writing styles and generate large amounts of content almost instantaneously. Observers believe it has several potential practical and artistic applications.

Source: https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2020/sep/08/robot-wrote-this-article-gpt-3
Media that can adapt to the user already exists

AI can be your personal DJ, customizing to your tastes and context

**WHAT:** Apple purchased an AI-based song-collage technology that allows AI algorithms to alter, edit, or even mashup a song based on the functional, demographic, or emotional context within which users listen to the song.

**SO WHAT:** Content absorption is influenced by context, according to conventional wisdom. Learning styles are influenced by various factors, such as learners’ ages, genders, moods, and the environments in which they are learning. AI technology could boost learning efficiency by identifying relevant contexts and adapting content accordingly.


Experiments in emotion-tracking responsive video already underway

Startup aimed at promoting “intelligent media” is helping to pilot early projects

**WHAT:** A-dapt is a UK-based consultancy created to commercialize and scale “intelligent media” that branches and adjusts based on who is watching and how they react using facial recognition and emotion-analyzing technology. Current projects include a pilot job interview simulator.

**SO WHAT:** Although the technology has been met with backlash due to its invasive nature, A-dapt sees potential use-cases, including digital classes that notice when a student is becoming bored and suggest different activities. Additionally, informed consent can be facilitated by using videos of actors explaining medical procedures to patients, that can adjust their message if the patient reveals signs of anxiety.

Source: https://startupsmagazine.co.uk/article-ai-serves-digital-media-based-users-real-time-emotions
WHAT IT MEANS: SHAPE-SHIFT MEDIA INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Offer content in multiple versions for different audiences and contexts

Automated tools to tailor content to specific audiences aren’t widely available yet, but you can manually adjust content now so that the length and language is appropriate for audiences with different time constraints or experience levels. It may be better to invest limited resources in making content relevant to target audiences rather than creating new content that may not be consumed. What are some ways to prioritize resources for relevance? Which audiences need your resources most, and how can you make them even more actionable?

Anticipate increased expectations around personalized communication

Personalized communication technology may advance faster than you think. It is likely that even if you don’t work with or target early adopters in your organization or audience, you will eventually be working with or trying to reach a cohort that is. Which factors affect the usability of information for members? What are low-resolution ways you might work to personalize what people see and when?

Consider and act on ethical issues involved with the use of data for personalization

When evaluating technology that aims to deliver more personalized communication, it is important to comprehend the mechanisms that lead to that personalization. In most cases, it is some form of personally identifiable information. How that information is acquired and by whom is something you should investigate and be familiar with before adoption in order to maintain trust with your audiences. What measures do you take to protect the data you collect?

Beware of extreme filter bubbles

Personalization can lead to extreme filter bubbles. Prevent this by nudging people toward more diverse content. What filter bubbles are your members setting up? How might you align with them or encourage people to change their habits?
THE COGNITIVE JUSTICE MOVEMENT
Activists demand structural change for equitable communication

Since research has established that poverty, racism, and exposure to poor environmental conditions result in diminished cognitive capacity, a new activist movement demands “cognitive justice.” Its argument is simple: if people’s life outcomes are determined by their ability to process information, make informed decisions, and exercise sound judgment, then they should have access to the resources that enable them to do those things well.

The cognitive justice movement capitalizes on shifts in public opinion driven by continued fallout from the “great resignation,” successful Universal Basic Income experiments, and growing anxiety about misinformation and about America’s global competitiveness. It aligns with other social justice movements and garners support independently of them.

While the movement is totally dismissed or even ridiculed in some parts of the country, in other places, it gains significant support and starts to shape the policies of local governments and private companies alike. Activists push for new rights to adequate rest, financial security, and physical safety to create a just society in which everyone is better at analyzing information and making decisions accordingly.

SIGNALS / WHERE WE SEE IT TODAY

Artistic project demands “rest as reparations” for hundreds of years of sleep denied to Black people

WHAT: Black Power Naps is an artistic project to raise awareness of the hundreds of years of sleep deprivation accumulated by Black people due to systemic racism. It cites the established sleep gap between Black and white people and its high cost to the mind and body. The project advocates for “rest as reparations” owed to Black people.

SO WHAT: Mainstream understandings of racism already have become substantially more sophisticated in recent years. They are now more likely to recognize the importance of structural factors. Over the next decade, even more nuanced understandings could shift how we conceptualize and remedy systemic discrimination.

Source: https://www.teenvogue.com/story/black-power-naps-addressing-systemic-racism-in-sleep
Journalist sounds alarm about unequal access to “extra neural inputs” that help us think

**WHAT:** In her book, *The Extended Mind*, science journalist Annie Murphy Paul describes a set of “mental extensions” or extra-neural inputs, that allow people to think effectively, such as social networks, communication environments, or natural and built physical environments. She also notes that access to these inputs is highly unequal, creating an important but underrecognized form of inequality.

**SO WHAT:** When information comes from an extended network, what people do with that information and how it affects them is shaped by factors outside of individual control and may give some a “network advantage.” Further research could establish these mechanisms more clearly and lead to new interventions to provide equity of “extended minds.”

WHAT IT MEANS: THE COGNITIVE JUSTICE MOVEMENT INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Account for people’s cognitive context and meet them where they are

Knowledge networks should be aware of factors that affect people’s cognitive states, reflect on how their audiences are affected, then adjust strategies accordingly. **How well do you know the challenges your members face around burnout or other stressful situations? How can you adjust your messaging to account for it?**

Cultivate capacity in your audiences

Knowledge networks can go beyond meeting people where they are to actually assisting them in improving their current situations. Networks should develop services or incentives to cultivate their audiences’ capacities to receive and mobilize information. **What could you do to ease external factors that cognitively tax your members?**

Confront long-term, systemic issues hampering your efforts

Knowledge networks don’t have to accept the current constraints that make communication difficult. Your organization can support movements addressing long-term structural problems. Efforts may not produce immediate results, but the results could ultimately be much more transformative. **What broader challenges do your members face? How could you help advocate for resources to address those challenges?**
WORKING WITH 2032 SCENARIOS:

Now that you’ve read the three scenarios, ask the following questions:

**What do I like in these futures?**
List elements of these scenarios you would like to see become a reality.

________________________________________________________________________

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**What don’t I like in these futures?**
List elements that concern you or that you would not like to see become a reality.

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**What can I do in these futures?**
List things that your organization could do in these scenarios that you can not do today.

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**What can I do about these futures?**
List ways you and your organization could bring about or prevent these scenarios.

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The RELEVANCE scenarios of 2032 can inform the actions you take today. Our research identified four general strategies for knowledge mobilization that you can pursue now and in the future:

Make it easy
identify ways to minimize time and effort needed to engage

Build trust
invest in long-term relationships

Be accountable
be responsive to feedback and take responsibility for outcomes with follow-through

Create proper conditions
consider structural factors and audience context as you make changes

Each strategy includes an example of possible actions inspired by a scenario. These strategies are possible ways to respond to the foresight—examples to spark your thinking about what actions to take today.
Connection 2032 to Today’s Strategies

How to Be Relevant by Making It Easy

**Foresight:** Shape-shifting Media

**Insight:** Offer content in multiple versions for different audiences and contexts

**Strategy:** Make content snackable

While knowledge creators often want to retain important details and nuances, uptake often requires making information fast and painless to consume: bite-sized, easy to digest, and habit-forming.

**Example:** When Procter & Gamble wanted employees to learn about future trends not immediately applicable to current work, they looked to Stanford Behavior Design Lab founder BJ Fogg’s “tiny habits” behavior change model. They created short entertaining videos and released them to all employees at regular intervals, suggesting that they could watch them when waiting for the bus or while they’re brushing their teeth.

How to Be Relevant by Building Trust

**Foresight:** Your Friendly Neighborhood Influencer

**Insight:** Expand how you define “expertise” and understand “qualifications.” Create or identify nodes of micro-influence

**Strategy:** See communities as a source—not just recipient of knowledge

Communities often have their own solutions or have already unsuccessfully tried what you are advocating. You can learn from their experiences on the ground and tailor your messaging and solutions based on an accurate understanding of the local context.

**Example:** 100Kin10 facilitated “Project Teams,” a series of partner-led, multi-org, six-month innovation sprints to solve a challenge that the participants identified. 100Kin10 embedded “scouts” with the teams to build off of what was already known and had been tried, instead of starting from scratch. This inexpensive intervention motivated participants to develop better solutions for their challenges.
HOW TO BE RELEVANT BY BEING ACCOUNTABLE

**Foresight:** Your Friendly Neighborhood Influencer

**Insight:** Expand how you define “expertise” and understand “qualifications.” Create or identify nodes of micro-influence

**Strategy:** Empower community stakeholders who are organically accountable

Communities freed from constraints can often address issues more effectively than people who do not have the same accountability that community members have organically.

**Example:** During the Pandemic, Oakland’s parent-advocate group REACH created a literacy program that doubled the reading-growth rate of vulnerable students. A perceived inadequate pandemic response from the school district motivated the group’s members to create their own solutions. REACH provided summer school when the district couldn’t, got needed supplies and meals to students, and also sued the state for failing to ensure educational equity — demanding Internet access, computers, and mental health care for students.

HOW TO BE RELEVANT BY CREATING THE RIGHT CONDITIONS

**Foresight:** The Cognitive Justice Movement

**Insight:** Cultivate capacity in your audience

**Strategy:** Address learning conditions and contexts for communication

Think about the structural issues constraining your organization or the audiences you are trying to reach and find ways to address them, rather than focusing solely on the communication themselves.

**Example:** Educators have been using the crowdfunding platform DonorsChoose to obtain the resources they need to create adequate learning conditions for students. This includes everything from basic classroom supplies to food to greenhouses, space for wellness, and teacher training/professional development opportunities. DonorsChoose is more of a stopgap than a holistic solution, and it isn’t a substitute for adequate funding. Still, it is helping hundreds of thousands of teachers and students. It is an example of people looking past constraints for novel solutions that create better learning conditions.
TODAY TO TOMORROW

Sustainable relationships are often key factors in knowledge mobilization. They involve reaching people, being relevant, and verifying results.

Today, we put a great deal of effort into spreading information quickly and efficiently. “Going viral” takes place despite weak connections, and this kind of rapid dissemination of information is vitally important. However, more durable knowledge networks are built on strong relationships, which takes time and resources.

During the next decade, technology will make the transfer of information even faster and more efficient. The limitations of rapid knowledge transfer and the importance of strong community bonds will become clearer. People will rely on community and relationships to forge a new communication infrastructure. We’ll see renewed efforts to ensure that people have the time, energy, and other resources to build and sustain a sense of community.
THREE FUTURE SCENARIOS

1. **TELL IT TO MY BOT**
   Bots become important intermediaries in human relationships information

2. **“SPRING-LOADED” NATURALLY OCCURRING NETWORK FRONTIERS**
   Building community as critical communication infrastructure

3. **REWritinG THE STORIES THAT MATTER**
   Co-creating narrative identities and infrastructure

These scenarios represent plausible views of how knowledge mobilization could change in the next decade. They are not predictions, and they are not the only future possibilities. They were selected for their balance between relevance and provocation in order to push your thinking about knowledge mobilization past current paradigms. They are thought-starters to help you explore a wider range of possibilities for the future of your organization.
In the 2020s, people used to reply to text messages. We would never use a bot for that. We had Siri on our phones and Alexa in our homes, but they mostly talked only when asked a direct question. It never occurred to us to have them speak on our behalf to others. These days, bots are almost always our first point of contact with others. Our bots schedule our meetings when we want to speak with someone. When the conversation is purely informational, we let the bot handle it. We never have to speak to anyone we don’t know well unless we have an extremely good reason to, because we can send someone to a bot. That may be why everyone has such a hard time interacting with strangers. You can see it in intergenerational awkwardness, such as when an older person makes small talk with a younger person at a bus stop and the younger one reacts like a deer in headlights. It doesn’t have to be like this, though. Bots are crucial for ensuring communication between partners, siblings, and parents at home. Having my bot remind me to talk with my partner, or tell me when I’m not really listening, has probably saved our relationship. It seems simple to program bots to encourage us to talk to strangers instead of keeping us apart. I’ve thought about it before, but I don’t want to be the only weirdo doing it. And, honestly, I just don’t have the time these days.

START EXPERIMENTING TODAY

In 2022, chatbots can cost as little as $2,000 to customize and then just $50 a month to maintain. Imagine a teacher visiting your network website for help and having a chatbot ask them what grade level, topic, and length of lesson they need. They are then directed to resources that meet their needs. And when they attend a networking event, they are now more focused on peer-to-peer interactions, not tactical needs.
**Difficult conversations are easier for some people when they’re talking with a bot**

**AI avatar deployed to help counsel victims of domestic abuse**

**WHAT:** The Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) and Resolve of Greater Rochester created an avatar named “RITa” as a tool for doctors to use to help patients take steps to end abusive relationships. RITa guides victims through questions to assess their mental status and safety risk and provides information about unhealthy relationship dynamics and their consequences.

**SO WHAT:** In some cases, people may be more comfortable disclosing sensitive information to or receiving emotionally charged information from a bot than a human being. Several services and interventions have been piloted based on this idea. In fact, the creators of RITa also have created virtual coaches RITch and RITchie to screen and counsel male offenders. In conjunction with cognitive behavioral therapy, RIT uses them to help model coping skills for reducing substance abuse and managing aggression.

Source: https://www.rit.edu/news/health-app-helps-victims-domestic-abuse

**Bots being put forth as a way to to mitigate bias in human beings**

**AI intermediary claims to reduce discrimination in hiring**

**WHAT:** GapJumpers provides tools that seek to help reduce discrimination in hiring by providing a platform for job-seekers to take “blind auditions” in which their job-related skills are assessed. The company uses AI to score and rank each applicant without including personally identifiable information. According to Forbes in 2018, “compared to standard resume screening, its use increases the chances of minority and female applicants being offered a first-round job interview by around 40%.”

**SO WHAT:** The results of GapJumpers point to the potential benefits of using machine intermediaries to reduce human bias and discrimination. It should be noted that these technologies are not a panacea and most are not mature enough yet to gauge their efficacy accurately. However, GapJumpers represents an improvement over previous attempts and suggests the approach holds significant promise.

Source: https://www.gapjumpers.me/
**Signals / Where We See It Today (Cont.)**

**AI offers scale to services that would otherwise be limited**

**Chatbot provides free legal services**

**What:** The DoNotPay bot is a service explicitly created as a way of equalizing access to legal representation. Originally launched as a chatbot that would file a dispute for parking tickets, it now offers services including filing for refugee status/political asylum, making Freedom of Information requests in the United States, and joining class-action lawsuits.

**So What:** DoNotPay envisions an age in which people can deploy bots in certain situations to represent them and bots can be used to expand access to services that can otherwise be very costly or limited. In addition, it indicates the possibility of a reverse digital divide, in which the privileged have access to human services while those without must rely on technology.

*Source: https://donotpay.com/

**Tech can be designed to facilitate, not eliminate, human communication**

**Vending machine nudges coworkers to connect**

**What:** In Japan, a beverage company launched a vending machine designed to encourage casual communication between coworkers in offices. When two workers place their ID cards on readers in the machine simultaneously, it dispenses two free drinks.

**So What:** This could open the door to building community by strategically designing and deploying other technologies within the built environment.

*Source: https://japantoday.com/category/national/Vending-machine-gives-out-free-drinks-if-you-use-them-with-coworker*
WHAT IT MEANS: TELL IT TO MY BOT
INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Identify areas where technology can fill communication gaps

Bots can quickly and inexpensively expand communication services, such as after-hours communication, automated captioning, and real-time translation. Although not all these technologies are ready for prime time yet, many will be soon. Prepare now to take advantage of the opportunities when the technology is ready. **What are some new ways you might help people navigate your content? How can you make your web experience more effective and interactive?**

Use tech to augment human capacity, not undermine it

When considering the adoption of automation technology, it is tempting to see it as a way to reduce costs rather than enhance productivity. Practically and morally, it is better to let human workers who now do the tasks decide where and how to deploy bots and how to make use of the extra time they provide. **Consider the types of tasks that might be useful to automate. Talk to staff about their needs.**

Anticipate shifts in communication norms

In the same way that smartphones created a set of new communication norms that differ according to age cohorts, AI intermediaries will change social relations and interactions. **What are the communication patterns of younger network members or staff members? What are their methods for assessing whether you are a credible source of information? Are there any other forms of communication you might consider?**
Most people will tell you two things that make First Fridays more successful than other initiatives to get people to interact with their neighbors, such as National Night Out. First, they are mandatory, and second, your employer has to allow you time off to attend. However, the real reason is probably that more people believe in the importance of community.

Despite years of research indicating the importance of social capital and social infrastructure, it wasn’t until the 2020s that ambitious projects and policies were implemented. Community-building went from being a buzzword to becoming the default approach for governments and companies. Early experiments became major success stories that captured the public’s imagination. (Sadly, a few climate events that resulted in shocking fatality levels due to poor community cohesion became cautionary tales.) Now, getting the go-ahead on almost any proposed public or private project requires proof that it will build community.

First Fridays were pitched as a civic duty, like jury duty, and a chance for people to spend more time hanging out and having fun. In fact, downtime more generally is being valued, at least in some communities. They call it “spring-loading” communities. If people are happy, well-rested, and connected to one another, they will be able to rise to the occasion when the moment arises, much like a fire department, whose members have a lot of downtime but are ready to act when the time comes.

Even though many people spend their First Fridays playing cards and talking about nothing in particular, the initiative provides funds and other resources to help with neighborhood beautification efforts. Many of us use this time to plan what we would like to change about our neighborhoods, even if it means endless arguments over whether one type of sports court is better than another.
‘Social infrastructure’ recognized for its role in disaster resilience, health, and economic well-being

‘Palaces for the People’ shifts awareness in the importance of built environment that supports community

**WHAT:** Eric Klinenberg investigated the data on a 1995 Chicago heat wave that killed 739 people, primarily poor African American and Latino citizens. He found that some communities, despite high poverty levels and other risk factors, managed to avoid high mortality. He concluded that “social infrastructure” is a critical determinant in the success of neighborhoods facing a disaster. His book on the subject, “Palaces for the People,” got significant attention. Similar research following Hurricane Sandy found that social factors in neighborhoods helped determine the immediate effects of the storm, as well as the long-term outcomes.

**SO WHAT:** As climate events and other social and economic disruptions destabilize American life, the benefits of social infrastructure may come into sharper focus. They could drive adoption of building community infrastructure in response.

Source: https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/557044/palaces-for-the-people-by-eric-klinenberg/

Mutual aid participation boosts long-term sense of community, agency, and purpose

**Limited study suggests benefits of participating in a network**

**WHAT:** The pandemic saw an explosion in mutual aid networks. A research paper based on interviews with 11 volunteers suggests a number of sustained benefits to participation in these networks, including increased sense of engagement in life, new or strengthened relationships, and a greater sense of control amidst disaster that rendered so many feeling helpless.

**SO WHAT:** Research establishing the benefits of mutual aid networks, as well as best practices for sustaining them over time, could popularize them and their mechanics in the coming decade.

“Network weaving” techniques for community building

Network for Racial Equity has sprouted from the sustainable-food field

**WHAT:** Food Solutions New England, a regional network for a sustainable, just, and resilient food system, initiated an annual 21-day Racial Equity Habit-Building Challenge for its members. The planning team designed daily prompts and supporting resources for participants to discuss racial equity issues online with other participants and in person with their friends and families. The challenge became so popular that it extended beyond its network members.

**SO WHAT:** Existing networks can provide a solid ground to incubate new issue-based information networks. However, the incubation’s success depends on the “network weaving” task of the organizer. Cultivating a network requires intentional planning for network-building activities and resources. As Curtis Ogden, from the Interaction Institute for Social Change, explains, “Network weaving is first and foremost concerned with creating rich foundations of connectivity that can give rise to emergence upon which people can build... Generally there is fundamental consideration in network weaving of how to create bonds of trust that can result in greater collaborative potential and sharing resources of all kinds. This then may give birth to greater alignment of intent among network members and opportunities for coordinated action.”

Source: https://21dayequitychallenge.com/

Strong community has benefits within organizations

A sense of safety and belonging is found to be a key enabler of performance in workplaces

**WHAT:** Google conducted an extensive global study of its teams to identify factors determining their success. It discovered that “psychological safety” (defined by Harvard professor Dr. Amy Edmondson as “a sense of confidence that the team will not embarrass, reject, or punish someone for speaking up”) was more important than factors such as the performance level of individual team members.

**SO WHAT:** As more benefits to community-building become more widely known, we could reach a tipping point where it becomes a default organizational strategy that deserves substantial resources.

Source: https://rework.withgoogle.com/print/guides/5721312655835136/
WHAT IT MEANS: NATURALLY OCCURRING NETWORKS
INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Look for places where “naturally occurring networks” exist or could easily be incubated

Creating community from scratch can be tremendously challenging and resource-intensive. In many cases, it might be more effective to identify networks that already exist or could be formed with minimal effort and then support and incubate them. Are you or your members part of “networks in waiting?” What is your network’s role in supporting or elevating naturally occurring networks?

Question the logic of “efficiency” and explore the benefits of patience and redundancy

The natural reaction to resource constraints often is to pursue “efficient” management. However, the result of efficiency can be brittle systems and organizations. Trust can’t be built overnight, and networks need time to grow and strengthen. New perspectives and approaches require repeated interactions to take hold. What opportunities can you find to build redundancy or downtime for community-building into your operations? How might you encourage members to connect authentically with one another and build trusting foundations?
REWRITING STORIES THAT MATTER
Co-creating narrative identifies and infrastructure

Marketers know that the best path to people’s minds is through their hearts, and that the easiest way to do that is to tell a story. The most important stories are often those we tell about ourselves, our communities, and our world, built over time across various media platforms. These stories define our relationships.

After struggling with misinformation for decades, it took us until the early 2020s to question who gets to tell them. This sparked an explosion of investments from governments, philanthropies, nonprofits, and other civic-minded organizations to develop the capacities and relationships to co-create and tell new stories.

Youth counseling in 2032 often involves exploring the stories that define their identities and frame how they receive new information about the world — then rewriting those stories together. Social and political movements are as much about crafting new “deep stories” together as they are about drafting sound policy. In general, knowledge mobilization strategies will examine how knowledge can be best moved through existing “narrative infrastructure,” and how to create new narratives if the existing ones are inadequate.
Formalizing methods for creating impactful narratives

University course on writing activism content

**WHAT:** Ohio Northern University is offering a college course on how to write effective activist messaging across a variety of platforms, from chants to flyers to press releases to social media posts.

**SO WHAT:** Mainstream institutions are starting to recognize the importance of messaging for social change, which is increasingly something that young people value. Many now are training activists and stakeholders to use the latest media and methods to create persuasive stories.


Funding the “narrative infrastructure” for a pluralistic future

A strategic project to shift the “story of America” and American identity to bridge narrative divides

**WHAT:** The Becoming America Fund supports and coordinates “a narrative network of entertainment leaders, artists, movement organizers, cultural strategists, and fandom organizers, for the purpose of promoting pluralistic narratives that can be the foundation for social change.

**SO WHAT:** The Becoming America Story Portal and other such projects shaping a “narrative infrastructure” could create new “deep stories” over the long term.

Source: [https://popcollab.org/](https://popcollab.org/)
Narrative frameworks for understanding and changing “deep stories”

Pop Culture Collaborative is creating principles for “pluralist storytelling”

**WHAT:** The Pop Culture Collaborative is a philanthropic resource and funder learning community that works to diversity America’s narrative landscape regarding historically oppressed people. It builds connections between the social justice sector and the media industry to help mass audiences understand the past, make sense of the present, and imagine the future of American society.

**SO WHAT:** PCC has generated frameworks for understanding the narratives that motivate people to embrace a pluralistic perspective that allows for building trust and collaboration across social and political lines. Such frameworks could become important tools for shifting the social and political landscape of the next decade.

Source: https://popcollab.org/

Changing an individual’s narrative identity allows them to process information differently

The UK focuses its youth re-entry efforts on “shifting identity”

**WHAT:** The UK’s Beyond Youth Custody initiative collected evidence on what works when resettling previously incarcerated young people. It recommended focusing all programs and services on changing the “narrative identities” of youth. The Youth Justice Board for England and Wales has adopted large chunks of the model based on the evidence.

**SO WHAT:** Stories about who we are frame the information we receive. People’s uptake of knowledge depends on how well it fits with their narrative identity. These interventions suggest the value of forging relationships that help people change their stories.

WHAT IT MEANS: REWRITING THE STORIES THAT MATTER 
INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Tailor messaging to connect with the “deep stories” of your audience

Sociologist Arlie Hochschild has explored how “deep stories” (narratives that evoke strong emotions by manifesting a collective’s history, values, and worldview) act as a framework through which we filter information. Understanding how your information will be received by these frameworks is crucial. Successful strategies have been employed by religious community organizations, anti-harassment movements, and government reform movements. How might deep stories change what you provide and how it builds connection amongst network members? Whose stories does your network prioritize, and whose stories are left out?

Build multidirectional relationships so that you can co-create new personal and community narratives

Information that threatens people’s narrative frameworks can be deeply counterproductive for knowledge-mobilization. Partner with your members to build connections and examine your narrative frameworks, and adjust them if they are in some way harmful. Who in your networks can help you tap into their narratives? What win/win scenarios might promote their work or enable co-creation?

Build multidirectional relationships so that you can co-create new personal and community narratives

Broader, societal-scale narratives are harder to change. Understanding them allows you to find others invested in change and enables you to confront narratives that constrain your knowledge-mobilization efforts. What underlying narratives that have been internalized by your members can you play a role in amplifying or changing.
WORKING WITH 2032 SCENARIOS:

Now that you’ve read the three scenarios, ask the following questions:

**What do I like in these futures?**
List elements of these scenarios you would like to see become a reality.

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**What don’t I like in these futures?**
List elements that concern you or that you would not like to see become a reality.

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**What can I do in these futures?**
List things that your organization could do in these scenarios that you can not do today.

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**What can I do about these futures?**
List ways you and your organization could bring about or prevent these scenarios.

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The RELATIONSHIPS scenarios of 2032 can inform the actions you take today. Our research identified four general strategies for knowledge mobilization that you can pursue now and in the future:

- Make it easy
  - identify ways to minimize time and effort needed to engage

- Be accountable
  - be responsive to feedback and take responsibility for outcomes with follow-through

- Build trust
  - invest in long-term relationships

- Create proper conditions
  - consider structural factors and audience context as you make changes

Each strategy includes an example of possible actions inspired by a scenario. These strategies are possible ways to respond to the foresight—examples to spark your thinking about what actions to take today.
**HOW TO GROW RELATIONSHIPS BY MAKING IT EASY**

**Foresight:** Tell It To My Bot

**Insight:** Use tech to augment human relationships, not undermine them

**Strategy:** Design “nudges” into platforms to seamlessly push people into participation

Platforms can make engagement nearly effortless through embedded “nudges” that make participation the default. Think about the ways you currently interact with your audiences and the platforms you use, then identify nudge opportunities. Learning to think strategically about tech intermediation can create a mindset for utilizing bots and other more advanced intermediaries in the future.

**Example:** The organizers of the “STEM for All Video Showcase,” a platform for promoting federally funded projects to improve science, technology, engineering, and math, embedded nudges in the platform to promote interactivity between presenters of short videos. For instance, they created a “presenter’s choice award” for which presenters were asked to vote on four presentations. A presenter could vote for their own, but had to vote (and therefore explore) for at least three other presentations in order for their vote to count. This increased the interactions between presenters and brought more concepts into consideration.

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**HOW TO GROW RELATIONSHIPS BY BUILDING TRUST**

**Foresight:** “Spring-loaded” Naturally Occurring Networks

**Insight:** Look for places where “naturally-occurring networks” exist or could easily be incubated.

**Strategy:** Design for inefficiency to build community

Palaces for the People author Eric Klinenberg has identified a drive toward efficiency as one of the forces that has eroded social infrastructure and community more generally. Designing intentional inefficiencies can be an important way to build community.

**Example:** In “Unanticipated Gains: Origins of Social Inequality,” sociologist Mario Small investigated how subtle program design in child care centers resulted in profound differences in relationship-building between parents. For instance, in an effort to make things as efficient as possible, some centers allowed parents to pick up children upon arrival. However, this resulted in less interaction than occurs in centers where parents must wait until a set time to take their children. In the latter situation, single mothers in particular developed significant friendships and trust, resulting in a network in which they provided mutual aid to one another in the form of babysitting and other support.
Accountable

Foresight: “Spring-loaded” Naturally Occurring Networks

Insight: Look for places where “naturally occurring networks” exist or could easily be incubated

Strategy: Capture and codify the practice of connectors in a network

The role of connector often is undervalued or even overlooked entirely. People who play this role in networks often have important knowledge that can be captured and used to foster networks.

Example: The National Network of Education Research-Practice Partnerships (NNERPP) recently created the “RPP Brokers Handbook,” a guide to codifying the work of those who broker knowledge in research-practice partnerships. NNERPP first identified the need to learn more about this specific broker role, then arranged for those who identified with this role to meet in multiple dedicated conference sessions over time. It also made efforts to identify the right group of people to lead these efforts – knowledgeable RPP brokers with the passion to drive this work forward. A core group of leaders and thought partners emerged from this, and they created the handbook collaboratively.

Conditions

Foresight: “Spring-loaded” Naturally Occurring Networks

Insight: Look for places where “naturally occurring networks” exist or could easily be incubated

Strategy: Create incentives to activate networks around outcomes that matter

Neighborhoods, organizations, or any other entities that include large numbers of people contain many potential communities or “networks in waiting.” Your knowledge-mobilization goal could likely benefit from activating these networks with the right narratives or incentives to see themselves as a community and as your partner.

Example: The Chicago public school system and Network for College Success created a program called Freshman on Track to increase graduation rates. It included reforms and changes to the mandate of instructors and other staff. One key change shifted the narrative of what a teacher’s job is. Conventionally, it’s about accurately assigning grades, but under Freshman on Track, teachers were tasked with ensuring that all their students succeed. When students were struggling, the teacher now had more reason to connect with other teachers to get a holistic view of the student experience and coordinate efforts. The result was the natural formation of “freshman success teams” which are now a codified part of the Freshman on Track program.
For several decades, quantitative metrics have become increasingly important in evaluating results. In the age of globalization, these abstract measurements have become essential for establishing trust at a distance. They enable people to collaborate at a scale never imagined, enabling us to observe social phenomena at unprecedented levels. In today’s world, we are so accustomed to taking this for granted that it is easy to forget how critical it is.

Through numbers, we track the performance of institutions like schools and non-profits, private companies and philanthropic foundations, and individuals. But numbers don’t always tell the whole story. They often fail to consider subjective, idiosyncratic ways to define whether a result is “good” or “bad” based on lived experiences. Moreover, they can divert attention from the big picture by creating narrow incentives.

The next decade will see the development of more sophisticated tools and methods for tracking outcomes, opening up more precise and varied metrics. But we’ll also see increasing skepticism. There will be new controversies and debates about which metrics are appropriate for specific goals or even if metrics should be used at all.
THREE FUTURE SCENARIOS

1. **RE-EXAMINING ENGAGEMENT**
   Uncovering the metrics that matter

2. **BRAIN- AND BODY-GENERATED LEARNING RECEIPTS**
   New tools for verifying knowledge-transfer push the limits of privacy

3. **FOR US, BY US ORGANIZATIONS**
   Trust becomes the embedded tool for tracking results

These scenarios represent plausible views of how knowledge mobilization could change in the next decade. They are not predictions, and they are not the only future possibilities. They were selected for their balance between relevance and provocation in order to push your thinking about knowledge mobilization past current paradigms. They are thought-starters to help you explore a wider range of possibilities for the future of your organization.
Not long ago, engagement was measured by simple metrics: views, likes, shares, and replies. This prioritized quantity and popularity over all else. Today, things are different, but arguably not any better. The crude metrics of the past have been replaced by new ways to measure results. In some cases, this involves a level of tracking that can feel uncomfortably close to stalking. Think of web browser cookies that track your search histories and site visits over time to ascertain whether someone made a purchase or a donation after viewing an ad. Today, that process is applied to people’s offline movements and tracked over much longer periods.

Not all approaches to measuring outcomes are quite that controversial, though. A number of organizations have adopted broader, more diverse metrics that assess long-term outcomes at the population level, reducing the need for granular information about individuals.

**SIGNALS / WHERE WE SEE IT TODAY**

**Understanding positive and negative externalities**

**Equitable transit is determined to have positive ripple effects**

**WHAT:** To plan a transit system serving minority neighborhoods, Minneapolis and St. Paul worked with activists and the federal government to include racial equity metrics. The result is a more robust job market in those areas, likely leading to ripple effects throughout the city. According to PolicyLink CEO Angela Glover Blackwell, the Green Line is an example of the curb-cut effect, in which initiatives aimed at marginalized groups have positive effects on society as a whole.

**SO WHAT:** The most meaningful metrics often fall those outside your organization’s control. Understanding externalities helps identify new opportunities for partnerships or other collaborations.

Source: https://policylink.app.box.com/v/equity-brief
Going beyond blunt engagement stats to track outcomes

**Dating platform attempts to track “successful dates,” as opposed to time spent on app**

**WHAT:** Dating app Hinge differentiates itself by measuring “successful dates” to calibrate a user’s ideal person.

**SO WHAT:** This approach of seeking more meaningful, long-term metrics points to new approaches to measurement.


Switching metrics to uncover new perspectives on justice issues

**“Spatial research” organization tracks place-based inequities to advocate systems solutions**

**WHAT:** The Center for Spatial Research’s Justice Reinvestment Initiative (JRI) helps local jurisdictions create geographically targeted interventions to reduce incarceration. According to the study, residents of 851 Chicago blocks were most frequently incarcerated, costing at least $1 million per block. This finding prompted ideas of redirecting those funds to community development efforts to address the underlying factors of crime.

**SO WHAT:** Interrogating metrics and taking a broader systems perspective can reframe problems in ways that have the potential to be transformative over the long term.

WHAT IT MEANS: INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Question existing metrics and look at the bigger picture

Given how urgent everyday organizational tasks can be, metrics often go unexamined. However, there are substantial opportunities to question existing metrics and seek more appropriate ones. In particular, examining how your organization’s communication might affect other stakeholders can reveal new opportunities for partnerships. What does “success” in knowledge mobilization mean for your network? How might you track and measure your progress in more accurate ways?

Create infrastructure to support different metrics

Identifying different metrics is one thing, but putting them into operation is another. The organization must gain buy-in from employees and stakeholders and have the capacity to monitor the new metrics. What do your current metrics actually tell you? What evidence shows the results of interacting with your organization? How might you identify metrics that reflect those interactions, even if they are on a human scale rather than episodic or technical?

BRAIN- AND BODY-GENERATED LEARNING RECEIPTS

New knowledge-transfer verification tools push the limits of privacy

How can we tell whether someone knows something? We can see it in their brain activity. At least, that’s the claim. Cheap portable brain activity scans are common, even required in many schools. The science is not settled, but they are seen as an important tool to bring accountability to schools and to develop new and better teaching techniques. Despite the skepticism, kids already use electroencephalogram technology to play games, so most parents went along with it. Many public schools need to use technology in order to receive funding. Because many of EEG’s biggest critics are also staunch supporters of public education, they subject their kids to it. Most workplaces don’t use the tech, but many people predict that when the young cohort used to them enters the workforce, that will change.

EEGs aren’t the only biometrics for knowledge transfer. Learning indicators such as gaze, pupil dilation, and heart rate also are used to track engagement and identify personalized patterns that induce a “flow state.” Their de facto use in many settings is not popular, but the findings can be useful. Many private schools that don’t subject their students to body or brain surveillance still benefit from the research, which is itself a source of controversy.
COVID is normalizing in-home surveillance

Schools and workplaces require students and workers to install surveillance software

WHAT: Countless workplaces and schools embraced remote work or learning for the first time during the pandemic. However, many of them required workers and students to be monitored by surveillance software to ensure they were actually in attendance and working.

SO WHAT: This level of surveillance was implemented without significant pushback or challenge, which suggests an uncomfortable precedent, particularly as more powerful technologies become readily available.

Source: https://www.npr.org/2020/05/13/854014403/your-boss-is-watching-you-work-from-home-boom-leads-to-more-surveillance

New tech makes it possible to study brain activity in real time

Portable EEG scans are being used to study learning in classroom settings

WHAT: An article in CBE—Life Sciences Education provides a roundup of EEG experiments to monitor students’ and teachers’ brain activity in classrooms. Researchers found that “students who reported being more engaged exhibited higher brain synchrony with their peers” and “brain-to-brain synchrony between pairs of students reflected how close they felt toward each other.”

SO WHAT: Portable EEG technologies hold the potential to provide new insights into how sociality and learning work. While the examples in the article use this technology for research, future devices that are more powerful and lightweight could provide real-time feedback on learning.

Source: https://www.lifescied.org/journal/lse
Substantial tracking already is taking place in schools

Opaque institutions are taking a major role in educational technology employed in majority of American schools

**WHAT:** An investigation by The Markup found that a single private equity firm, Vista Equity Partners, owns controlling stakes in many of the biggest ed-tech players, including PowerSchool, which holds data on more than 45 million students, including 75 percent of K-12 students in North America. The investigation found that Vista’s companies collectively “gather everything from basic demographic information... to data about students’ citizenship status, religious affiliation... whether they live in a two-parent household, whether they’ve used drugs, been the victim of a crime, or expressed interest in LGBTQ+ groups.”

**SO WHAT:** This kind of tracking has benign uses, such as eliminating equity gaps. Still, the lack of public awareness implies that tech may be implemented without much public awareness or oversight.

Source: https://themarkup.org/machine-learning/2022/01/11/this-private-equity-firm-is-amassing-companies-that-collect-data-on-americas-children
WHAT IT MEANS: INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Get literate in new verification tech and prepare to clear confusion and combat misuse

You must understand potential new workplace or classroom tech, especially if it is used to make decisions or evaluate performance. Organizations have disastrously embraced systems that don’t offer the promised level of insight, often adopted without much public debate. Who in your network tracks verification systems? What can they teach about current experiments in learning settings, and could you create a visible sandbox to test these as people use your resources?

Convene others to debate the merits and risks of adoption

Fostering conversations early is crucial, as is convening stakeholders likely to be affected. Connect with tech ethicists and communicate what you learn to your communities. What surprising partnerships might help elevate this conversation in your network, from tech providers to scientists and teachers hungry for new insights? Can you be seen as a convener of inquiry into how the future might be different?

Reject punitive applications of new metrics

The consequences of getting it wrong are much more dramatic when metrics are used punitively. Be clear when tracking misbehavior or reasons to separate someone from your network. What is the right level for decision-makers in your organization to be involved in developing punitive responses to indicators of unacceptable behavior?
‘FOR US, BY US’ ORGANIZATIONS

Trust as the tool for tracking community-defined metrics

Sometimes, seemingly complex methods for tracking results turn out to be simplistic and reductive. At least, that’s the philosophy many organizations take. The 2020s really were, in some ways, the decade of verification. The decline of traditional workplaces, rise of remote work, endless blockchain hype (and some legitimate uses), and dramatic advances in biometrics created the demand for verification and solutions that claimed to supply it. But the decade also saw a lot of what author Venkatesh Rao described as “theater of rigor and empiricism, driven by a deep anxiety about uncertainty.” And communities and organizations burned by such approaches were looking to a different tactic to track results: trust.

The 2020s also saw more worker-owned cooperatives, stewardship organizations, and digital autonomous organizations. Those that enabled new forms of trust among organizations, people involved, and communities defined, tracked, and achieved results most effectively. A new set of practices came into play for letting stakeholders reach a consensus on what matters, then track those results. They track lots of metrics and constantly question if they are tracking the right things. Stakeholders feel a sense of shared purpose and mutual respect, so they have little reason to use numbers as a shield or to deceive. They know that pointing out their own problems or missteps will result in support, not punishment.

SIGNALS / WHERE WE SEE IT TODAY

Participatory research leads to more knowledge uptake

Study finds districts with long-term relationships with researchers are more likely to utilize research

WHAT: Knowledge mobilization in education is challenged by the limited accessibility of research for/to educators despite their desires to participate in research. EdTech Evidence Exchange in partnership with U.S. Department of Education’s Institute of Educational Services held convened in 2018-2019 about how educators access research. Additional findings from the world of Research Practice Partnerships (RPPs) found that districts with RPPs (defined as long-term relationships between university researchers and a district) tend to be more likely to use research in their work.

SO WHAT: This finding suggests that there is an opportunity to achieve more uptake of knowledge if educators are more involved in research, pointing to the benefits of participatory research more generally.

Source: https://edtechevidence.org/report/Educator-Voices-on-Education-Research/
**Principles from alternative organizational structures can be adapted for any workplace**

**Nonprofit promotes worker cooperatives and worker cooperative principles**

**WHAT:** The Democracy at Work Institute is a nonprofit that promotes worker cooperatives to expand opportunities to low-wage, immigrant, and Black, Indigenous, and people of color workers. Its structure uses a combination of worker cooperative principles and practices along with conventional nonprofit management elements.

**SO WHAT:** Nonprofits can borrow systems and practices from alternative organizational models to share power more evenly across the organization. Power-sharing has been associated with increased transparency, accountability, and communication, suggesting that these models might help track results more effectively.

Source: https://institute.coop/about-dawi

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**Large, conventional for-profit corporations are exploring new models**

**Taco Bell Business School aims to turn fast-food workers into franchise owners**

**WHAT:** Taco Bell collaborated with the University of Louisville to create the Taco Bell Business School program for employees to learn how to run a Taco Bell franchise. This creates a path to ownership for employees who might otherwise not think of running a franchise because the resources to do so are out of reach.

**SO WHAT:** While it is too early to evaluate any results, this experiment suggests it is possible to see a shift in baseline expectations around how a business could be structured to benefit workers.

Source: https://www.morningbrew.com/retail/stories/2022/01/20/taco-bell-is-opening-its-own-biz-school
Experiments in organizational structure

DAOs offer potential alternatives to existing orgs

**WHAT:** Decentraland is a virtual community that operates as a distributed autonomous organization (DAO) running on the Ethereum blockchain. Launched in 2017, it recently has seen accelerated growth, thanks to the power of non-fungible tokens (NFTs). In Decentraland, users can buy virtual assets and participate in the platform’s project management.

**SO WHAT:** Users of Decentraland and similar platforms are trying new models of decentralized governance, in which every participant is an owner and a manager. Whether or not these specific formats or platforms go mainstream, experimentation with organizational structure is likely to yield important information.

Source: https://gnosisguild.mirror.xyz/t4FSrltMw4mlpLZf5JQhEibDFQ2jRVkAzEpanyxW1Q
WHAT IT MEANS: INSIGHTS FOR KNOWLEDGE NETWORKS

Explore alternative organizational structures and revenue models that might better support your mission

While nonprofit, not-for-profit, and B Corp models have been around for quite some time, alternative models provide new organizational forms that might better serve your mission or fit the kind of community you want your organization to be. **How old is the structure of your network, and if you were building it from scratch today, would you still use much of that same structure?**

Create infrastructure to foster trust, and finds ways to measure it

Alternative organizational forms allow you to prioritize outcomes that other organizational structures do not. However, even the best metrics can lead to tunnel vision, with people pursuing numbers and losing sight of its intention. Instead, balance metrics with other ways of tracking goals. **How would your members share evidence that they find trusted resources and people in your network? What structures and measurements can be based on that?**

Get out of the way

Sometimes, organizations take their own necessity for granted. It is worth examining whether your stakeholders might be better served if you found ways to equip them with the infrastructure or other resources for greater agency and self-determination. **Can you set aside surveys and give space on your platform for participants to shape the content and structure, so that you can learn from what they think is needed?**
WORKING WITH 2032 SCENARIOS:

Now that you’ve read the three scenarios, ask the following questions:

**What do I like in these futures?**
List elements of these scenarios you would like to see become a reality.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

**What don’t I like in these futures?**
List elements that concern you or that you would not like to see become a reality.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

**What can I do in these futures?**
List things that your organization could do in these scenarios that you can not do today.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________

**What can I do about these futures?**
List ways you and your organization could bring about or prevent these scenarios.

___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
___________________________________________________________________________
CONNECTING 2032 TO TODAY’S STRATEGIES

The RESULTS scenarios of 2032 can inform the actions you take today. Our research identified four general strategies for knowledge mobilization that you can pursue now and in the future:

- **Make it easy**: identify ways to minimize time and effort needed to engage
- **Be accountable**: be responsive to feedback and take responsibility for outcomes with follow-through
- **Build trust**: invest in long-term relationships
- **Create proper conditions**: consider structural factors and audience context as you make changes

Each strategy includes an example of possible actions inspired by a scenario. These strategies are possible ways to respond to the foresight—examples to spark your thinking about what actions to take today.
**HOW TO VERIFY RESULTS BY MAKING IT EASY**

**Foresight:** For Us, By Us organizations

**Insight:** Explore alternative organizational models that might better support your mission

**Strategy:** Solidarity economics

Many collective-ownership models, such as communal farming plots, Black commons, Freedom Farms, Black credit unions, mutual aid networks, and community land trusts have been piloted by marginalized communities. While these tend to be models specifically related to property ownership, they also are a strategy for redistributing power from exploitative systems and giving communities greater agency and empowerment. Such models make it easier to trust that results are being reported accurately, because community actors’ incentives are aligned.

**Example:** Oakland, California, residents created the Oakland Community Land Trust to mitigate gentrification. It acquired and developed 50 units of housing after the 2009 mortgage crisis and has since acquired and stewarded commercial, multi-use, and live-work properties to ensure affordable rents for culturally important businesses and grassroots organizations in Oakland.

**HOW TO VERIFY RESULTS BY CREATING CONDITIONS**

**Foresight:** For Us, By Us organizations

**Insight:** Adopt the right metrics, and approach them with nuance

**Strategy:** Balance meaningful metrics

Former Intel CEO Andy Grove promoted the use of “paired measures” to avoid unintended consequences. This consists of taking the metric you assume you most want to focus on (often a “quantity measure”), thinking through what an unintended consequence of mindlessly pursuing that metric could be, and using that to identify a secondary or “counter metric” (often a “quality measure”) with which to balance it.

**Example:** Chicago public schools achieved a stunning increase in graduation rates due to an innovative program to reorient staff goals to ensure students’ universal success. According to Dan Heath in his book “Upstream,” this was a truly successful intervention, as demonstrated in “paired measures.” The school tracked both the quantity of graduates and a “counter metric” (in this case, SAT scores and AP course placement) in an effort to ensure that the school wasn’t just graduating poorly performing students to fudge the numbers.
HOW TO VERIFY RESULTS BY BUILDING TRUST

Foresight: Brain- and body-generated receipts
Insight: Reject discriminatory invasive and punitive applications
Strategy: Incentivize honest answers

It often can be difficult to get accurate results or feedback, because people fear they will be penalized. Taking away the threat of failure can create the sense of trust needed to promote candor.

Example: Educators typically dread observations, because they often are used to point out deficiencies. With this insight in mind, Robert Kaplinsky, president of e-learnings provider Grassroots Workshops, wrote a blog urging the use of the hashtag #ObserveMe as a way of flipping this script and empowering teachers to choose the areas they want to strengthen, rather than having them imposed on them. Tens of thousands of educators from many subjects and countries participated. Asking teachers to take a trend and personalize it empowers them, so that it becomes something they’re doing for themselves rather than something being done to them.

HOW TO GROW RELATIONSHIPS BY CREATING ACCOUNTABLE

Foresight: For Us, By Us organizations
Insight: Get out of the way
Strategy: Don’t provide solutions— build power

Some well-intentioned organizations are so focused on their own solutions that they do not recognize that the communities they are trying to help want or need something different, or would be able to solve issues on their own if given the resources to do so. Sometimes the most effective strategy is letting communities set the terms of engagement.

Example: In 2010, the California Endowment launched a decade long, $1 billion initiative to build healthier communities in California, aiming to pursue outcomes the organization thought California’s communities needed in order to thrive. After community partners objected to its predetermined theory of change, it shifted to listening to, working with, and empowering its community partners to achieve health equity and racial justice.
LEVERAGING THIS REPORT TO CREATE LASTING CHANGE IN NETWORKS

In the 5- to 10- year timeframe for knowledge mobilization, professional networks will have to pilot new practices to stay relevant and impactful. Networks of knowledge mobilizers already face questions that include:

- **How do we rethink our roles** as members increasingly turn to Pinterest, Twitter, and TeachersPayTeachers for information?
- **How do we retain Black and Latino leaders** when they are often leaving the profession because they don’t feel supported?
- **How do we show the results and effects of our network** as people use competing resources or combine our services with those from other organizations?
- **How can we create resources** that people want, rather than resources we think they want?
- **How can we provide people with the needed information** in the most useful time, place, and specifications that align with our mission?

IFTF created this toolkit to help individuals and professional networks explore these types of questions and to forge a path to the future using our research report. You might dedicate to this ideation process a few hours, a two-day strategic planning meeting, or four individual sessions spaced out to tackle the four R’s—Reach, Relevance, Relationships and Results one by one. The exercises can be completed solo but, as with most strategic foresight processes, they become far more robust and useful if completed with others—particularly others who don’t think like you.

So gather up some colleagues or partners and dive in.
PROCESS OVERVIEW

1. **Choose an area in which you would like to improve** and become more future-ready: Relationships, Reach, Relevance, or Results.

2. **Identify an innovation challenge or opportunity you face** in that area. If you are working with a group, share that challenge with others.

3. **Read the relevant report sections** and note what stands out to you. What can you do in these futures? What can you do to anticipate these futures? Discuss your first thoughts with others.

4. Create an **initial future approach** to your innovation challenge or opportunity leveraging the anticipated changes from the report.

5. **Play-test and iterate with others** (in your network or outside it) to improve your future approach.

6. **Map the road from here to there.** Plot the short-, mid-, and long-term actions that build towards future approach, considering your needs from both the future-back and the present-forward.
CHOOSE AN AREA IN WHICH YOU’D LIKE TO IMPROVE AND BECOME MORE FUTURE-READY

We suggest that everyone within your ideation group tackle the same “R” area at a time. This will allow you to focus and support each other as you go through the process of close, deep reading and learning from that section. Once you’ve run the process with one of the Rs, move on to the next when you are ready.

To build resiliency for the future, my organization needs to strengthen our approach to...

REACH
What tools and techniques will be used in the next decade to communicate knowledge?

RELEVANCE
How will people find knowledge that is relevant, reliable, trustworthy and actionable in the next decade?

RELATIONSHIPS
How will relationships develop and change through knowledge mobilization in the next decade, and what types of relationships will be needed?

RESULTS
How will results of knowledge transfer be measured in the next decade?
STEP 2
IDENTIFY AN INNOVATION CHALLENGE OR OPPORTUNITY IN THAT AREA

Complete the following sentences, then share what you developed with those with whom you are completing this process

Our innovation challenge/opportunity in this area is ...

This is a critical challenge/opportunity for my organization because ...

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
The innovation challenge or opportunity you choose should relate specifically to the “R” on which you are focusing. Some examples:

**RELATIONSHIPS**

**Our innovation challenge/opportunity is...**

To engage and support diverse school leaders in the principal pipeline regardless of their relationship to our state affiliates.

**This is a critical challenge/opportunity for my organization because...**

We want to enhance engagement and support of underrepresented school leaders, which is a priority across the profession. Our organization operates in relationship to its state affiliates. Over time this arrangement has impeded our ability to support and engage diverse school leaders directly. We can’t help develop a pipeline of diverse leaders without new approaches to relationship-building.

**RELEVANCE**

**Our innovation challenge/opportunity is...**

To develop and deliver content that leverages the knowledge and experiences of veteran educators with a delivery style that resonates with approaches and habits of new educators—while being useful to both generations.

**This is a critical challenge/opportunity for my organization because...**

New educators are sourcing professional development using fundamentally different methods than previous generations. Ten years ago, educators found relevant, reliable, trustworthy, and actionable content from education leaders that were vetted by associations and their publications and conferences. New educators now are turning to social media, where content is often vetted by the number of likes it has received.
DO A CLOSE READ OF YOUR REPORT SECTION

Read the relevant report section (all elements related to the R you are focusing on) and note what stands out to you about how the future will be different and how the way you operate may change.

Discuss these and any additional notes with others to expand on your thinking and catalog intriguing possibilities—particularly those that could help you with your innovation challenge or opportunity.

What can you do in this future? List the things your organization might be able to do in these scenarios that you could not do today.

What can you do to anticipate this future? List ways you and your organization could contribute to making these scenarios a reality (if they are something you would like to see happen) or prevent them from happening (if it is something you want to avoid).
OTHER NOTES. Which signals made you stop and think? Which concepts do you want to make sure to remember? Other thoughts that arose?
Use your notes and discussions from the previous step as inspiration to imagine a future approach to solving your innovation challenge or taking advantage of your opportunity. This approach should leverage the new possibilities presented in the report.

Consider writing your example from the future, i.e. “My organization has launched a platform connecting X, Y, and Z people using these new technologies. Teachers around the world are scrambling to get into our network, thanks to its highly relevant matches that help all stakeholders learn and grow.”

What is your new future approach* to your innovation challenge or opportunity?
What will your members’ experience look like if you are successful in addressing this area?
*Try writing from the future
STEP 5

STRESS-TEST AND IMPROVE YOUR APPROACH

Share your future approach with others and stress-test it through a collective brainstorm. What can your organization do to build its muscles to prepare for this new approach? What bumps might you face along the road to implementation, and how might you plan to navigate around those? Work together to refine your future approach.

**List challenges and opportunities presented by the future approach**

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

**What can your organization do to build its muscles to prepare for this new approach to addressing your challenge/opportunity? How might you address the challenges or take advantage of the opportunities?**

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________

**REFINED FUTURE APPROACH to your innovation challenge or opportunity. Ideally written from the future!**

____________________________________

____________________________________

____________________________________
BUILD AN ACTION ROAD MAP

Follow the instructions below to map out an initial approach to how you might get from here to there.

- **Use the column** on the far right to describe your future approach.

- **Define your timeframe.** Approximately how many years from now is the future or goal you described? Work backward from that date to define short-, mid-, and long-term time horizons.

- **Brainstorm a list of possible actions, milestones, or success metrics** needed in the long term to make your preferred future or goal a reality. Thinking from the future back, what would need to be in place for this to happen?

- **Refine your list and add items to the roadmap.** If they are easier, place them below the midline. If they are tougher, place them above the midline.

- **Work backward to create your road map,** repeating this process with mid- and short-term horizons, each time asking, “What actions would be needed to build the future we want?”

- **Take a step back and consider the roadmap as a whole.** Are you missing anything? How would the map look different if you started from the present and worked toward the future? Sometimes thinking both future-back and present-forward helps us spot missing elements.
WHAT’S NEXT?

Don’t stop now! Get a near-term action on your calendar in the next month to start building toward the future. Rally your network around this idea. Practice sharing a succinct version of your future-informed approach. Try saying:

“Based on what we observe, there will be new ways of doing ____________________________ (your challenge area) in the next 5 to 10 years. Our organization can build resilience for the future today by starting to ____________________________ (your future approach). Won’t you join us in building for tomorrow?”