

# Becoming a Principled Innovator

The practice of **Principled Innovation** provides opportunities for individual, relational, and organizational development within the moral, civic, intellectual, and performance domains. The continuum that follows is a reflective tool for individuals, teams, and organizations to identify the degree to which they are currently engaging in the practices of Principled Innovation and embodying the four domains. This resource is designed for introspection across contexts to support growth, not evaluation. While it appears linear or hierarchical in nature, this continuum reflects the complexity of ecological character development through the practice of Principled Innovation, allowing for natural movement within and between the four domains. Individuals, teams, and organizations are always in a state of becoming. New experiences, relationships, situations, interactions, or leadership changes may influence regressions, reassessing self, relations, and systems in order to continue development.

Principled Innovation asks us to work with others and recognize the limits of our own knowledge so that we can better understand and tackle the complex issues our communities face.

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**Practices**

- Identify and acknowledge fundamental values
- Utilize moral and ethical decision making

**Assets**

- Fairness, Honesty, Humility, Empathy



**Individual**

How am I acting in situations that require an ethical response?

**Relational**

How do we collaborate as a cohesive team that honors each others' values and bases our actions on ethics?

**Organizational**

How does our culture embody compassion, joy and service for others?

Rigid interpretation of rules. Self-oriented. Absolute and finite thinking. Simplifies moral issues to only two opposing sides. Fear-based decision making.

Team leaders make decisions. Moral issues have only two sides. Group follows established guidelines, opposed to change. Lack of awareness of common values, no admission of errors.

Fixed systems with reluctance to change. Decision making based on limited perspectives. Environment of fear of failure due to punitive measures, hierarchical power structure.

Recognizing moral dilemmas. Building empathy. Identifying various viewpoints.

Seeing need for flexibility within the current systems. Beginning to seek multiple perspectives, listen with empathy, and identify common values. Fear of failure.

Recognition of moral dilemmas. Developing conditions for collective empathy. Appreciation of the need for flexibility.

Understanding of individual differences and contextual factors through a lens of fairness and empathy

Allowing time and space to hear from each other and stakeholders with humility, appreciate their values and perspectives, and seeing multiple sides of moral dilemmas with impartiality. Beginning to recognize errors and their lessons.

Time and space provided to grapple with moral dilemmas. Aware of the responsibility and flexibility necessary to respond to the needs of individuals and groups.

Moving from empathy to compassion. With humility and fairness, considers needs of others prior to acting. Grapples with moral dilemmas through reasoning.

Collaborating flexibly with compassion, honesty, and humility. Using open-mindedness, informed reasoning, and collective values to discuss errors, make decisions, and support unique needs. Starting deliberative dialogue to navigate moral dilemmas.

Creates space to be nimble. Embraces solutions to support unique needs in varying circumstances based on fairness.

Facilitates decision-making from multiple perspectives. Honestly evaluates situations with open-mindedness, integrity and justice. Responds with meaning and responsibility.

Working authentically as a cohesive, relational team with shared purpose. Embraces collective ownership of errors and commitment to honesty, fairness, humility, and empathy; explores various sides of issues and leverages individual assets and deliberative dialogue for collective practical wisdom.

Enlightened, committed and clear in purpose. Cultivates gratitude and fosters authentic relationships. Committed to listening and valuing others' opinions, providing just interaction while systematically supporting the needs of others. Strives to create a fair and just society for all.



By Domain

# Civic

## Practices

- Understand culture and context
- Engage multiple and diverse perspectives

## Assets

- Altruism, Civility, Inclusivity, Perspective Taking

Nascent ←

→ Transformative

### Individual

How am I contributing to the common good and betterment of society?

Missing opportunities for social engagement. Isolated and withdrawn.

Compliant engagement. Remaining centered in own culture and context. Engaging only with like-minded peers.

Limited engagement with diverse perspectives. Self-referential yet aware of cultural and contextual differences. Conscious of local, national, and global affairs.

Seeks civil dialogue with multiple perspectives and asks questions for understanding. Intrinsically motivated. Actively engaged in creating social solutions.

Commitment to public good through local, national, and global engagement. Dedicated to addressing and challenging systemic issues for the well-being of others.

### Relational

How does our shared work contribute to positive human flourishing?

Siloed team, hierarchical structure. Limited diversity of thought; dominant voices drive decisions. Performative, rather than authentic, inclusion.

Occasional collaboration; senior leaders drive work with some use of data. Limited diversity and perspectives, divisive dialogue. Extrinsic incentives for inclusivity.

Shared motivation to acknowledge community values and identities; awareness of cultural and contextual differences. Some voices included, but engagement inconsistent or inauthentic.

Strong collaboration; all members engaged. Authentic involvement of community and stakeholders in civil dialogue. Cross-team engagement for alignment.

Collective commitment to public good; intrinsic motivation to serve. Culturally inclusive and altruistic with respect for all perspectives and values. Genuine collaboration and intent to support one another.

### Organizational

How does our organizational culture represent equity, service, and engagement?

Hierarchical environment with emphasis on leadership voices and lecture.

Provides for basic needs. Gives members a token voice.

Engaged and fair, but organization-focused; limited voice for members.

Supportive culture; members encouraged to contribute to solutions and foster change. Promotes interaction and dialogue with diverse groups.

Ethic of civility, authentic collaboration, and service. Culturally inclusive; all voices contribute to transforming structures and culture of service and engagement.



By Domain

# Intellectual

## Practices

- Reflect critically and compassionately
- Develop habits of a systems thinker

## Assets

- Truth-Seeking, Critical Thinking, Curiosity, Reflection

Nascent

Transformative

### Individual

How do I value truth and knowledge in discerning the right actions?

Uninformed, singular viewpoint, unaware of diverse perspectives.

Informed yet without commitment to discovery and truth.  
Increased curiosity.

Committed to personal pursuit of knowledge.

Explores interdisciplinary and cross-cultural perspectives; asks inquisitive questions. Reflects on others' viewpoints, aware of systemic challenges.

Values reliable information and truth-seeking. Utilizes data and evidence for innovative, creative, and critical thinking. Challenges the status quo for meaningful, systemic change.

### Relational

How do we hold each other accountable to engage in ongoing reflection and truth-seeking?

Knowledge isolated, top-down transfer only. Team operates in silos, disconnected from others' work and larger systems; no reflection opportunities. Punitive response to mistakes or limited knowledge.

Some members recognized as experts; share knowledge and support for short-term goals. Limited internal expertise, no engagement with external insights or inquiry.

Pursuit of knowledge, systems thinking, and critical reflection valued for team and organizational goals. Intermittent data-driven decision-making. Trust is fostered. Safe to admit mistakes or gaps in knowledge; mistakes neither celebrated nor punished.

Continuous growth is valued and members seek to learn from mistakes and challenges. Practice of truth-seeking, thorough inquiry, and critical and compassionate reflection are becoming systemic.

Compassionate, critical reflection integral to collaboration. Data-driven decisions rooted in truth, culture, systems, and context. Curiosity, inquiry, and collective innovation celebrated.

### Organizational

How does our environment and culture symbolize thinking?

Tradition-focused, status quo maintained. Emphasis on knowledge transmission, limited inquiry. Siloed understanding and practice.

Intermittent questioning, complacency, non-committal toward new ideas.

Commitment to pursuit of knowledge for benefit of the system. Encouragement of critical thinking.

Engaging, interactive environment, respects diverse perspectives. Intellectual safety prioritized.

Emphasis on truth-seeking and transparency. Supports innovation, creativity, and collaborative problem-solving for complex challenges.



By Domain

# Performance

## Practices

- Navigate uncertainty and mitigate consequences
- Design creative solutions

## Assets

- Collaboration, Courage, Creativity, Resilience

Nascent ←

→ Transformative

### Individual

How do I empower effective moral, intellectual, and civic responses?

Limited resources for motivation.  
Fear-driven reactions and fixed mindset.

Externally motivated actions; allows failure to halt progress.

Emerging recognition of potential to make a difference; limited action.

Belief in making a positive impact; intrinsically motivated for good of others.  
Growth mindset, applies consequential thinking.

Actions guided by moral, intellectual, and civic assets. Navigates uncertainty with courage, perseverance, and resilience. Anticipates and mitigates consequences; collaborates to design creative solutions for complex social and educational challenges.

### Relational

How do we collectively strive for continuous improvement in a moral, intellectual and civic manner?

Operates within established norms; resistant to change and fear of failure.  
Externally controlled resources.  
Limited time and initiative for creative ideation or decision-making.

Recognizing potential in collaboration; questioning norms and expectations; starting to take occasional risks.

Developing trust; experiencing success and potential as a team. Learning to support each other; beginning creative problem-solving; viewing challenges as learning opportunities.

Established team relationships; feeling of psychological safety. Identifying and complementing each other's strengths; engaging in collaborative routines. Openness to sharing/receiving divergent perspectives; discussing lessons from challenges to improve decision-making.

Existence of collective practical wisdom; strong collaboration; appreciation for individual strengths and divergent perspectives. High expectations for moral, intellectual, and civil teamwork. Resilience to learn from past experiences, informing future decisions and creatively navigating uncertainty.

### Organizational

How does our culture embody continuous improvement?

Minimal motivation or incentive for action.  
Externally controlled resources and resistance to change.  
Punitive consequences for failure.

Support network offers some external motivation; awareness of alternative operations.  
Hesitancy to challenge the status quo.

Commitment to fostering individual agency through full support and encouragement.

Support for innovative systems empowering individuals to generate new ideas for the greater good. Safe space for vulnerability and risk-taking.

Highly collaborative and responsive; high performance expectations in a fair, just environment. Values creativity and practice of principled innovation for positive change in humanity.

# Individual Practice

Nascent ←————→ Transformative

## Moral

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# Relational Practice

Nascent ←

→ Transformative

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Nascent ←————→ Transformative

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