



Cycle of Engagement Transcript

September 2, 2020

0:03:29 Tanya Tucker: Hello, everyone. Welcome. Thank you so much for joining us today, for this Wellbeing Blueprint webinar, The Cycle of Engagement. I am Tanya Tucker, with the Full Frame Initiative, and Full Frame is proud to be a part of a growing group of public sector, non-profit, community leaders, who share a commitment to really using this moment to drive structural changes that will move our country towards equity, wellbeing and justice, and towards our vision that everyone has a fair shot at wellbeing in this country. And we know in order to transform and rebuild our inequitable systems, and to really do that in a way that centers on community, and what really matters to people, that's gonna take collective action. And so, how can we be more effective in actually getting people off the sidelines to engage, and to participate, and even more importantly, how do we keep people engaged for the long haul?

0:04:40 TT: So we are thrilled today to have with us Sarah Sullivan and Chris Scott, to share The Cycle of Engagement a framework that they developed for really understanding the stages of how Americans engage in civic life today. We'll have time, at the end of their presentation, for questions, but please feel free if a question pops in your mind, to use the Q&A tab at the bottom of your screen to put in a question. We'll be monitoring those, and we'll get back to those at the end of the presentation, during the Q&A session. So, I will, at this time, turn it over to Sarah and Scott.

0:05:24 Sarah Sullivan: Thank you so much, Tanya, and thanks so much everyone for being here, and of course, the work that you're doing, it's a real pleasure to get to be a part of what you're doing. My name is Sarah Sullivan, and I am the Head of Product and Program for Think of Us, which is a technology-focused non-profit that's working to transform the outcomes for older youth in foster care, specifically those who age out of foster care. And think of us as one of the partners in the Wellbeing Blueprint, so that's one of the ways we got connected to this now. And I wanna introduce my colleague, Chris Scott. Chris...

0:06:03 Chris Scott: Hey, everybody. I'm Chris Scott, I am a senior designer and researcher at Alloy. We are a progressive data company, kind of rethinking how progressives and democratic campaigns can use data. And I got my start in this space working with Sarah on this research, looking at how people actually engage in the process in the beginning, and so now looking at the back end of that, on the data side, to tell people how and when people are engaging, and how to keep them there.

0:06:32 SS: Beautiful. Thanks, Chris. So, I wanted you to know a little bit about our backgrounds now, but actually this presentation that we'll be giving today is one that we did in our past lives, just before this, way, way back in the old era of 2017. So, next slide... And Chris and I were running, at the time, a new non-profit organization, called The New Data Projects that had come about right in the aftermath of the outpouring of engagement we saw in January 2017. And so, this talk is a little bit of a story of how that research came to be, and what we found, and how some of those lessons, we think, can apply to this moment in time. So, next slide...

0:07:20 SS: So we'll start our story back at the beginning of 2017, which, of course, feels like decades ago. And, in that moment in time, obviously, we had just inaugurated a new president, and we saw this tremendous outpouring of civic engagement. Obviously, with the women's marches, lots of new people starting to run for office for the first time, many people beginning to engage in civic life, really in a new way, and we saw that as a tremendous opportunity. But, as a new organization, we thought, What can we do to be of service in this time? We were a technology-focused organization, so we thought we were going to build something, but everything was changing so quickly, that it was unclear what would even be useful to build.

0:08:05 SS: So we started where good technology projects should start, and we started doing a bunch of user research. And so, basically, our goal was to understand what was really going on, and what would keep people engaged. So, to Tanya's point, we saw this tremendous outpouring of activism, which was great, but we could obviously see that that was... Engagement at that level was likely to not last forever, so what would actually help propel this to have the kind of momentum to where it could be lasting? And, in particular, our organization was really thinking about the mid-term elections in 2018, so we had nearly two years that we were thinking about how can you take this moment in time and propel it to actually continue on, so that it could make a difference in November 2018.

0:08:58 SS: So we recognized that we were, back then, in kind of a similar place that we are in this moment, with tremendous societal change, tremendous societal engagement, all of which are confusing, on the change part, and wonderful, on the engagement part, but poses the really important question, which is, Now that we have many, many people engaging in these ways, which is a tremendous opportunity, how can we actually capitalize on this momentum and put... As organizations, put the right guardrails in place, so that we can actually help this lead to true transformation, which obviously is what the Wellbeing Blueprint is a part of.

0:09:39 SS: And I'll just say one other thing, after we kind of get to the end of our presentation, I think some of this will make more sense, but I think it's... I think it is interesting to think about what the threads... Like how wellbeing intersects with civic engagement and I think you'll kind of see some of that come through so I'm excited to talk about that. Okay, so the next slide.

0:10:00 SS: It was January 2017. We didn't know what we didn't know. And so we dug into a deep user experience research process and we picked up on the research where some of our colleagues had left off, particularly a colleague in the space named Kate Krontiris who had done a bunch of research out of Google, Google Civic Engagement Lab around what she coined interested bystanders and these are people who were very interested in issues, who knew a decent amount about issues, cared a lot for sure, but for whatever reason, they weren't taking action. And so these were the people that we thought were critical to understanding. Certainly, our super activists who are gonna vote no matter what, who are gonna organize no matter what, they're gonna be there. The real question we thought is, How do we actually continue to mobilize many of these people who are engaging for the first time or who still haven't gotten interested... Like haven't made that leap to actually engage, but they're really interested.

0:11:02 SS: We interviewed people all across the country that had that kind of profile, from every... We specifically recruited people who identified as people who were not engaged and we also talked to activists and experts on civic engagement to really try to put together a model of what is going on with civic engagement and much of what we found was very surprising. Stories that you'd have people who were super engaged you might say in their professional lives, go-getters, all this kind of stuff, but then didn't make the leap in civic life and all sorts of really complicated stories about people's relationships with civic engagement. And we noticed a lot of contradictions that seemed inconsistent with existing models of civic life. Of course, once we gathered all this information, the first thing we did was looked at the existing models for understanding civic engagement to try to see if it fit to that and to really map and understand what we learned and what we found is that, that was inconsistent. Chris is gonna tell you a little bit about that on the next slide.

0:12:17 CS: Many of you may be familiar with a traditional model, which is the ladder of engagement. This is kind of the model that maps engagement from starting at a lower rung of

saying, "Hey, maybe I'll sign a petition," to a higher rung, which is like, "Hey, maybe I'll run for office." But as Sarah kind of led up to and mentioned, this model kind of tracks engagement in a very linear way and much of what we would find in the research was that people's actual interaction with the civic arena isn't really linear. And so while this was helpful, it seemed to not really reflect the complexity of what we were hearing in the research. And so I wanna mention a few things, a few examples of things that didn't seem to work for us. Again, because this is linear, it doesn't really account for how your engagement can wax and wane over time and kind of one anecdote of someone that we talked to during the research was that she actually self-identified as someone who was not engaged and we talked to her about why and about how that was for her. And at the end of the interview, she said years ago, she actually had a run for office. And we were just kind of baffled by that, but again, that kind of story wouldn't really make sense in this current model.

0:13:33 CS: Additionally, the ladder describes the action that someone is actually taking, but it says nothing about why someone would take those actions in the first place and importantly how they feel when they do it. We heard a lot of stories about people who were really passionate about the issues and were moved by things happening in our society, but didn't take action because they didn't know if their actions would have an actual difference or mattered. Another piece of this and really important piece actually is relationships. As many of you all know, we don't take actions in a vacuum. We do them in relationship with other people. And so when you think about actions as static steps on a ladder, you don't actually explain any of that relational context. And someone's action... Someone's connections and relationships to this work, not only affect their initial access to action, but also how good they feel when taking action and how likely they are to actually do it again. And then the last kind of thing that I wanna talk about, about the limits of this model is that it doesn't reflect for the diversity of experiences or how civic engagement can play out in different communities. And so it's really important for us to remember that the things that really work to engage folks from one group may not work for another group.

0:14:57 CS: A couple of examples, we talked to folks who were from immigrant communities and we found many folks from those communities do vote and felt like they were doing it 'cause they were voting on behalf of people who were maybe undocumented in their community or people who are in their family who are in that status. And so thinking about how we can leverage that as a unique cultural thing or a unique experience is important when thinking about deeper levels of engagement from that kind of community. Additionally, for black communities, we found that Black Americans tend to have the highest rates of civic participation relative to their level of resources and education in part because there's a cultural norm to honor ancestors and the way that that manifests in the civic arena is through voting. And so it's really important for us as organizations to think about how we can lean on norms like that in ways that encourage engagement and to remember that those are unique to different kinds of communities. Another example is with Asian-Americans, I think when calibrated for the level of resources and education, Asian-Americans tend to have the lowest level of civic engagement of any racial group and part of that is because they don't have the same norms around voting. And so, again, it's important for us to remember that we have to lean on different tactics when encouraging voting there.

0:16:28 CS: And so because of all of these contradictions and all these different... The diversity of all these experiences, we determined that we needed a better way to visualize the complex nature of civic engagement and what... Especially if our goal was to uncover how we can actually sustain it over time, and how we can get people to engage deeper over time. And so we wanted a way to figure out how do we think about these emotions, motivations, experiences, and importantly, relationships. Next slide, please.

0:17:06 CS: To understand what we were learning, we created a new model, so I wanna introduce the cycle of engagement, and we're gonna walk you through how this works. But I'll just say off the top that unlike the ladder, we didn't map specific actions like voting on here, instead we thought we should map internal states that someone goes through when acting in the civic arena, and because we found that engagement is cyclical and not linear, and we found that it is relational and tied to our sense of self, Sarah and I are gonna walk through how many of those qualities play out and sort of map to the cycle. And as we go through each one we'll kinda share a key takeaway about how you can apply some of this understanding to your work. So next slide.

0:18:01 CS: We're gonna walk through how this works. And there's a lot here, so I'll give you one to look at this, but I kinda wanna also walk you through it slowly through the different phases. As you can see there's a light purple phase here on the left side, and I should say off the top that there are two sides to this diagram, there's... The left side describes states of being not engaged, and the right side is looking at how you are when you are engaged. So, starting there on the purple one there is the sort of avoidance phase, which is where many people start, they're unengaged and they're not really sure what to do about that.

0:18:40 CS: But then they kinda move into the teal section, which is learning, and this is where someone begins to understand issues, learn about them, and build a personal confidence towards taking action. From there, they move into the sort of light green phase, which is where someone really evaluates, what role do I have as a civic actor, and how do I find opportunities to do something about that? And then importantly, in this sort of light blue phase is the ask. And this is really where someone is invited to actually do something, either by another person or organization, or because they just feel internally called to act. And so after answering that internal call to act, they move into the orange phase, which is where they actually take an action. And so that might be coming out to a march, that might be making a call to their Senator, it might be starting an online petition, but just something to get them started. A small action.

0:19:41 CS: And after they do that initial action, they move into that dark blue phase, which is where someone actually, makes a commitment to doing more, and finds a way to really sustain that effort. And this is important because this is where we want more people to be the. This dark blue phase of commitment and sustainment. Importantly though, after that is the dark purple phase, which is where someone really evaluates what they did, and if it mattered. And that leads to a fork near the end of the cycle, which is where people take time to rest, recover, and hopefully, take action again. However, if that also... Because it's a fork, it could lead back into burnout and regression back into inaction. And so here with this kind of intro to the cycle, we just want your takeaway to be people's interactions and relationships with civic engagement change immensely over time in non-linear ways. And this is kind of an intro to how that can happen. Next slide please.

0:20:45 CS: So I wanna show you guys how different dimensions of civic life map to this cycle. The first one that we're gonna walk you through is emotions. Civic engagement is emotional. And so perhaps, the emotion that we are almost most familiar with right now is anger. We've got a lot of anger going around, and it is really fueling our sort of progressive resistance and much of what we see happening. And that's for good reason. But if you look closely, look at where anger falls here on the cycle. It's there in the light green phase. So anger is only a starting point, because anger alone is actually a pretty exhausting posture to maintain, and it really won't sustain what we wanna see over time. And so it's really important to know that as we think about how we message things, how we engage folks, anger just isn't enough. It turns into apathy over time, anger is again, here on the left side of the cycle, and so because we want more folks to be here on the right side, our goal was to get people into hope, into pride, into optimism.

0:21:58 CS: And so again our key take away here should be that burnout is important to be aware of, and so to avoid it, we need to get people into hope. Next slide should have a quote. This is a... We talked to a number of activists during this research, and we talked to a woman who ran a group in Seattle, a local group of activists. And she said, in the beginning people just showed up because they were angry, but now I need a way to get people to... Now I need to find a way to get people interested again, and maybe make it more positive and upbeat, because folks get tired of everything being so depressing all the time. Next slide. I turn over to Sarah.

0:22:45 SS: Thanks Chris. Okay, the next point that I wanna highlight... You know what, Chris can you hear me? Okay, great. The next aspect we wanna highlight is that civic engagement is always tied to our sense of self, so, we... Just like we did with emotions, we basically took this cycle and layered over it different identities around our sense of self, and what we found is that basically our empowered, bigger, stronger feelings overlap with the right side and actually being engaged, and often those smaller, less empowered feelings are on the left. So feelings like I'm stupid, I'm worthless, I'm lazy, tended to correlate with the engagement patterns of not being engaged versus the strong feelings of I belong, I'm important, I'm strong, overlapped with people who were very engaged in civic life.

0:23:49 SS: So the really interesting piece about this is that we found that our internal state has much to do with what our external activities look like. So how we're feeling about ourselves emotionally and as a sense of self... How we're feeling emotionally and about our sense of self are great indicators of what our external behavior in civic life looks like, and what we found is that the people that we talk to over here who would sometimes feel like I'm worthless, I'm stupid, that these people weren't lazy or apathetic, generally speaking, what we found is that they literally had made the decision and reflected on the potential actions they could take, and were not sure that their actions would actually matter.

0:24:44 SS: So it wasn't coming from... It wasn't necessarily coming from a place of like, "Oh, I just don't feel like it," or, "Oh, I don't care," it was coming from a place of, "Do the actions that I could take actually matter?" So our big take away from this idea is that the most sustainable sense of self here is a feeling of deep belonging, which is over obviously on the dark blue slide on the right, and to belong, we need to feel like we matter and that we are in strong relationships with others, and that we are deeply empowered, and if we can basically get folks to the internal state of feeling like they really belong in a movement, to other people, to the cause, then that's actually a very sustainable place to be in, because from there that goes into this, I'm important stage, which is evaluation... So if the dark blue, I belong, is the work, and that purple is the evaluation and reflection on the work, if you're going into that feeling like you belong and that you're important, you can make that loop back around in the recovery, which is the I'm strong, you could make that loop back around and then keep yourself on that right cycle, which is ultimately where we're trying to hope... Trying to encourage, trying to encourage people to be. Okay, next slide.

0:26:03 SS: And this is a quote by one of the leading experts in this field of civic engagement, Lisa Garcia Vidalia. And she said, "It's not that people are lazy. It's not that they don't care. It's that they think they don't have the power to do anything." And in that kind of posture, not doing anything, if you don't think that you have the power to do anything would of course be a rational decision, it would make sense and it wouldn't be coming out of laziness or apathy, it would be a well-reasoned position. So the idea is we actually have to give people actions that one, do matter, and then two, help people feel like they actually matter when they do them. Okay, next slide.

0:26:49 SS: Okay, one big point we wanna talk about is that civic engagement is risky. Now, obviously, not engaging is also risky, there's societal risk when we don't work on improving the problems of our time, obviously there's deep societal risk to that. I'm gonna assume that everyone on this call kinda gets that part, so we're not gonna dig deep into that, but what we wanna talk more about is some of the personal risk of engaging civically. And what we basically saw time and again is that engaging in civic life had a whole range of risks to relationships, to self, to identity, and to more. Now, you can take a very obvious literal example of going to a protest that might be dangerous or where you might get arrested, and that's a very obvious tangible risk that someone might have, and we saw things like that.

0:27:47 SS: But we also saw even more subtler... What you might think about as subtler risks. We talked to a bunch of people around their behaviors and thoughts around posting a political message or a social commentary message on Facebook and how they felt about that, and what we saw is that people have much different varying comfort levels when it comes to doing something like that, and specifically, they have different risk tolerances for different groups of people and for different people. So many people might not feel comfortable making a bold political statement on Facebook because they're thinking about all the different people that follow them and how those relationships might be threatened, but they might have one particular person or a group of particular people that they would be willing to have an individual conversation with about an issue, and basically what we found is that people are doing all of these kinds of mental math all the time that's mitigating and thinking through ultimately the risk of behaving civically.

0:28:49 SS: And the biggest one I would say is around... And in here we have obviously examples on this slide like bodily harm or money spent, or loss of jobs, and those were real, but I have to say the thing that we probably heard the most was around... Was around straining relationships and not wanting to put... Not wanting to basically put the burden of different political issues on certain relationships, and people knew which relationships could handle something and which couldn't. And I think this is especially interesting right now when we're going through a time collectively where many individuals are having some really hard conversations as organizations, inside their families, inside their schools, and we're having a lot of big conversations and hard conversations around race and injustice, and it's just important to know that people of all kinds are weighing the personal risk of having those conversations and in which spaces. And so I think anything that we can do to help acknowledge that is good.

0:29:55 SS: I will kind of fast forward just to give you one little anecdote to put this in some context. Ultimately, what we ended up doing with this research was as our last organization, we applied this to basically creating something that helped get out the vote in the 2018 midterm elections and what we actually created was this application called VoteWithMe, which is a mobile phone app that helped you find the people in your life that might need to be encouraged to vote and then had you text them to vote. And so, unlike the apps that are going around where campaigns are texting strangers and a stranger from campaign you never signed up for is texting you something, this was not that. This was a friend, someone you already know, texting you with a reminder to vote. Now, what we found time and again in this is that people were very, very cautious and had very different levels of risk tolerance to texting a get out the vote message to somebody that they knew. And one of the ways that we were able to overcome that from a design perspective is that we ultimately tried to create a product that was as transparent as possible so you knew what you were looking at and why and why one friend was showing up on your list to text and another friend wasn't. And we tried to give users as much control as possible.

0:31:15 SS: I'll spare you all the details, but in an early version of the app, we just gave people a

few list of names thinking that a shorter list might be easier, but they basically felt like... And in that way, it wasn't very transparent. You didn't know why these names were on it and why other names weren't. And so instead, we opted to give people a list of all their contacts and then basically gave users the power to sort and decide who they wanted to reach out to. And all of this was ultimately to mitigate risk 'cause people felt like the task of reaching out to their own friends with a reminder to vote, which was not... It was non-partisan, not... It didn't advocate for a candidate. It was a neutral reminder to vote, that that was so risk... People were so risk-adverse to that, that we wanted to create a product that ultimately mitigated that risk and gave a task that felt safer to the end user so that's a little bit of how we ultimately used this research to build something ourselves. Okay, I'll pass it back to Chris and the next slide.

0:32:23 CS: Great. Thanks, Sarah. As we mentioned before, civic engagement is also quite relational. And so here on the right side, I've called out a couple of sections in the blue and purple areas where you see all the things that we should be doing to help keep people engaged. And those things are all quite dependent on strong relationships and as Sarah said, a sense of belonging. We know that movements are made of lots of human connections and it is those relationships that make people feel a part of something, which is really important. We know that that connection to people... We know that our connections to people who share our values and our identities help to build new kinds of relationships and strengthens old ones. And as I said earlier, folks oftentimes act on behalf of their community. And so those connections and those relationships are what motivates people to care and make meaning of what they're doing. For anyone in the room who's an organizer, you will know the adage, "Volunteers come for the candidate and stay for the organizer." And that's really because we need other folks to help us dig in and we need other folks to really help... To hold folks accountable and we need folks to help us commit to them as well as to the cause.

0:33:49 CS: And then if you look here in the purple section, there's that juncture around recovery and after someone has showed up, they've sort of worked hard and it's important for us to remember that they're gonna need folks to help... They're gonna need other people to help them, pat them on the back and say, "Hey, you've got this. I support you. Stay here. Stay in this. Take what you need. I can help." And that kind of reminder helps them know that they belong in this work and that they have support from others so that they don't slip down into burnout again. And so, again, our takeaway here should be that when we focus on deepening relationships, people began to understand not just their individual power, but also their collective power. And it is that power when you put it across a network that creates a momentum that pulls in a lot more people.

0:34:43 CS: On the next slide there's a quote that we came across from Simon Sinek, which is, "When you look out and find people who believe in the same things you do, those people become brothers and sisters in that moment and it is those experiences which inspire people to do it again and again." And this is really important to talk about, especially right now, I'll just say... I'll mention a little bit about, we're all living through this COVID-19 moment, through this pandemic and we're finding it especially difficult to solve collective challenges amidst this pandemic when we are physically separated from other people. The ask of us right now is social distancing when we all know that what we really mean is physical distancing. And as a result, relationships have had a big reset or a big setback rather. And so even though it's harder, we're gonna have to figure out how to apply a more intense effort around building relationships right now because it is really as important... It is as important as ever to bring more people into the fold on to our shared challenges.

0:35:54 CS: And then on the next slide, I'll just say a little bit about organizations. I know many people on this probably work for different orgs and maybe are wondering how would these actually apply to the work within an existing organization. And I think if any of you are taking on that task

to make things better, to help your org think about how to engage folks better, to maybe implement some of what we're talking about today, we know you're gonna be up against a lot because oftentimes, organizations are quite self-centered. If you look here in the green phases, orgs really leverage a lot of anger to help keep people engaged and motivated. We know that oftentimes here in the light blue, orgs think about money as one of the main asks of people, "Give me money." We also know that when folks are taking more significant actions, much of the... Many of those actions are sort of designed by the organization without consideration for people's unique skills or talents or individual drive to contribute and it's a lot less focused on empowerment and saying, "Hey, you figure out how to be part of this and you figure out how to leverage what is your unique background to sustain."

0:37:17 CS: And then lastly, I think people know that... We heard a lot in this research that people were hesitant to even give out their email address because of the non-stop emails, the non-stop asks for things without consideration for the cyclical nature of what this feels like and what it's like to actually be part of a thing and need rest, recovery and time for reflection to actually keep going. Just a little tidbit there, I just wanted to mention that here, the take away should really be if, us, as organizations really wanna strengthen the capacity of people and design... We should be focused on designing programs and actions and as Sarah said, digital products that let folks get the most out of what they're good at already. We have to help people to figure out... Get out of fear and anger and into hope, help them feel really empowered in this work, help them feel safe when we know many actions are quite risky for them and lastly, we really have to center relationships in this activism for folks to deal with that sort of deeper sense of belonging. Next slide.

0:38:30 CS: We'll kinda... Go ahead, Sarah, but I was just gonna say, we'll kinda close up with some final thoughts on our big question, which is, how might we design for deeper civic engagement and momentum? And so I'll let Sarah mention a few points there.

0:38:47 SS: Beautiful. Thank you, Chris. Here, you can see what we've done is we've kinda flipped the cycle on its head and if you look at it this way, with the engaged part at the top and the not engaged part at the bottom, it actually can look like this mountain that we're gonna climb and get folks up the mountain. It just gives you another way to think about it and look at it. And here, you can see and I'll just let you read it at your... On your own time, these... Some of the blocks that we can really think about as we're building movements and as we're building organizations that you can do to help get us there. Like empower, don't tell and encourage rest and help people avoid burnout. I'll let you take a look at some of those. And Chris did a really nice job of summarizing what are our key takeaways that we wanna share today about civic engagement being cyclical and knowing that engagement changes over time in non-linear ways. We can be mindful of that as organizations when we're building out and encouraging engagement and that civic engagement is emotional and that to avoid it, we have to get people to hope and that civic engagement is tied to our sense of self and the most sustainable sense is this feeling of belonging and that when we feel like we belong, we know our actions matter. We have strong relationships with others and feel empowered. So getting folks to that place is super important.

0:40:15 SS: And then knowing that civic engagement is risky and I think organizations like to sometimes... Sometimes, they're run by very outgoing people that don't share the same personal risk fears that other people do. Being mindful of what diverse experiences look like as far as how people handle risk is important. And then lastly just to Chris's point around civic engagement being relational. While I let you look at this for just a moment, just some closing thoughts. I mentioned already how we used this research, which is we did this in the spring of 2017 and then immediately started using it to build out what ultimately for us became the app called VoteWithMe, which helped

get more people out to vote in 2018. And I already mentioned how we kind of mitigated risk as a part of it, but another piece is that we centered relationships directly into it. The whole idea was that you actually reach out to people that you already know and that reinforcing strong, meaningful relationships and putting a civic engagement ask... And embedding a civic engagement ask within that relationship was a powerful way to encourage action so we did that and... Okay, what...

0:41:39 SS: And so that's kind of a way that we used our own research to build something, but we think this model is still interesting regardless and we recognize that you all are in a similar moment as we were maybe a couple of years ago in thinking about how do we sustain momentum and how do we use this momentum to do a new initiative for which you all, of course, it's the Wellness Blueprint. And just one point about the kind of overlap between activism and wellness, which even as we put this talk together is a little bit... Are not two topics that you always hear going together, activism and wellness. And in some ways, we have a piece of us that feels like that these things can be counter, that in some ways, these things are counter to one another, like either I care about other people and I will work for other people or... And I will spend my time doing that or I care about myself and I'll work on self-care and it's an either/or exchange. If I'm taking care of myself, then I can't be taking care of other people. And I think all of us innately know that's not right, but there's some piece of the narrative that's kind of told that way.

0:42:43 SS: And one thing that is really interesting is that this model really puts that dichotomy... Has another perspective on that dichotomy and does not think that taking care of other people and taking care of yourself are any different. Because ultimately, in this model, it's... If we actually indirectly address the internal state, we can get folks to feeling hopeful, to feeling empowered, to feeling like they belong, all of which are ultimately internal states of being, that if we can get those internal states of being, that's actually what maps with the most amount of civic engagement and more civic engagement.

0:43:24 SS: So contrary to this idea that wellbeing and activism are somehow separate, that really they're fundamental to each other. Having folks being in a thriving state of wellbeing is what we'll reflected out from there being a thriving... Will be thriving civic engagement sphere. So that's kind of one of our big takeaway is that knowing that this internal state actually is what determines or has a huge impact on what happens externally is one of our big takeaways, and Chris, I'll let you share any final thoughts you have before we open it up for questions.

0:44:03 CS: Yeah, I think we're thinking a lot about how this applies now. Because as Sarah said, it's about a couple years ago, we did this research. And so we'd love to know what's kind of bubbling up for you as you hear these things, how it might talk about... How it might inform some of your current work or how it might questions that you have, as you heard kind of what we shared.

0:44:30 TT: Thank you, Sarah. Thank you, Scott. I do want to open it up for questions from the group. And certainly you can post those in the Q&A 'cause we've got time for those, and I'd love to actually get us started with a question. And both of you, I think, alluded to our current context and environment that we're in right now, throughout your presentation. But so you know as a country we're dealing with basically two pandemics, right, our coronavirus and systemic racism, which certainly has been around for centuries, but at the forefront for us right now. And given that that's our current context that we're dealing with, are there particular points in the framework as you've presented it that are particularly poignant that we need to be paying perhaps even closer attention to because of everything that's going on in our environment now? Are there points in the framework that our current context just makes more difficult? Or perhaps some places where it would be easier to engage because of our current context?

0:46:18 SS: Chris, do you want to go first? Or do you want me to go first? I'll go. Yeah thanks for that question. I think one piece is... So on some of the emotional parts, like on the emotional level, we see obviously an enormous amount of anger in the collective. And while ultimately we think that anger is not sustainable in the long term, that ultimately anger is best used to have us as a propellant to take us somewhere into some of the emotions and actions that are ultimately the kinds that you can sustain in the long term. But I also want to acknowledge that anger is extremely valuable in getting folks mobilized. And as we know, you can't just create that moment out of thin air typically, it's very hard to create that on your own. And so the fact that we have this moment with a lot of passion and a lot of energy is actually a wonderful opportunity. And is great, obviously. And so that's opened the door for a lot of people, including many many people and many young people, many people who have never engaged before, now, all of a sudden many of those interested bystanders aren't interested bystanders anymore, they're in the arena. So that part's wonderful and phenomenal.

0:47:40 SS: And I would... This model suggests that the task really is great, now that you have so many more people in that stage, how can we actually help propel them and propel all of us into a place of even deeper engagement that can sustain? So I think this model suggests that one of the key places to look is that anger transition, where anger kind of alchemizes into other things. So I think that is a really important moment right now.

0:48:06 SS: And then I think the other that is also true is around relationships. But to Chris's point, it's even more complicated right now because of both the way that we're living in the world, and I think relationships are always critical to sustaining movements. But we're in a moment in time where our relationships are really hindered. People can't, at the moment, gather in the same way. I think a lot of people haven't been in closer relationship with people right now. And so we really need to figure out ways to really come together knowing that it's harder, knowing that our tools for doing that are weakened right now. So how can we be even more intentional in helping to relate to each other and be in relationship with one another because that will ultimately be what propels.

0:48:55 SS: And we've spent a lot of time talking about people who are less engaged, because that's what our research focused on. But that relationship piece is also critical for people who are... Probably the folks on this call who are deeply engaged in their communities because that relationship piece is where those kinds of folks can share knowledge, can bring other people up, and ultimately get the kind of feedback that helps people who are going to be in it for the long haul, who have been in it for the long haul, gives them the kind of momentum and purpose and meaning that makes all of those decades and years of participating worthwhile.

0:49:26 SS: So relationships is obviously very, very important for everybody, kind of the people who are new to the scene and not. Chris, anything else you would add about this moment?

0:49:39 CS: I don't think I had too much more to add. But I think about how, again, one of our focuses in 2018 was the digital product that helped people, not just do a thing, but actually understand why it mattered, helped them understand their impact, and provided social proof that it actually works. And in the process help them to deepen their connections and relationships. And so, I think that for those of you who are working in like the digital space, there are a lot of opportunities to embed much of this into products, online campaigns, etcetera.

0:50:19 TT: Thank you both. Please do if you have questions, get them in the Q&A. And I just want to... I think you're absolutely right, Sarah, that there's so much connection between the cycle

of engagement framework and what you all are learning around civic engagement, and wellbeing. I mean, talking about the centering on relationships piece and people wanting to belong is, you know, one of the five domains of wellbeing and social connectedness, and the importance of that. And the fact that people want to matter and they want to have a sense of what they're doing, actually, is making a difference and that relates to our mastery domain and really seeing the correlation between your effort and outcomes. So there's a direct correlation to wellbeing there. And I think the importance of the Wellbeing Blueprint beyond sort of the work you all have been doing in terms of kind of the individual impetus for getting engaged and for participating, is that we're actually calling on people to look at what are the contexts that are either enabling the right people to engage and participate, or actually putting up barriers and challenges.

0:52:10 TT: And I think this goes beyond just sort of voting as a means of civic participation, but certainly engaging and participating in the efforts of our organizations, of our agencies. And really looking at what is our responsibility to... As systems, as organizations, to really look at, what are the challenges that we are putting up for people to engage in meaningful ways, right? If relationships and sort of deep relationships and this social connection and belonging is really important, think of all the times that we call it sort of community engagement, but really, we're centering ourselves, we're centering our organization, we're centering our agency need, and we're trying to get sort of input and feedback around that instead of really meeting community where they are and building that relationship and what matters to them.

0:53:24 TT: So I see that as the importance of the blueprint to really look at contexts and what are the structural ways and changes that we can make that actually help people to access their wellbeing, help them become more engaged in their communities, in civic life. But that that's a different, that we're not really just talking about sort of the individual and self-care in that...

0:53:58 SS: Right.

0:54:00 TT: Yeah.

0:54:00 SS: Absolutely, of course. And I'll just... I think, you know, it really, really resonated... What you just said really resonates. But one piece, in particular, is in that piece around looking at... Excuse me. It's looking at the actions that organizations are providing to people that I take this feeling of... You know, when people say that they're not sure that their actions matter, I think a piece of it is looking at, "Okay, well, how can we, you know, better educate and explain that... " Maybe we're not spending enough time explaining how a certain action actually is meaningful or builds up into the larger whole and... Or maybe it's a lack of feeling empowerment, and we can spend more time helping someone get to a place where they feel empowered. There's that piece of it. But then there's also the other piece of it is like maybe it's direct user feedback that the actions that they're being invited to take are not actually meaningful to them. And certainly, we know this. We're like most organizations, the first thing on the list is to donate money. And it's not even so much whether people have or don't have the money. It's just it doesn't often feel very meaningful to them and people want to feel like they're meaningfully helping.

0:55:14 SS: I mean, you hear so much that people have... The interested bystanders, they'll stay up at night reading about immigration, or some of the hard issues that can be upsetting to people. And, yet, they're not taking action. And one of the reasons why is that they go to an organization's website, the first thing is, "Will you donate?" And they're just like, they can feel like there is nothing meaningful to do.

0:55:38 TT: Yeah.

0:55:38 SS: And I take some of that as being direct user feedback of like, "Okay, what actions can we provide that would be really meaningful?"

0:55:46 TT: So we have a question here. I'm curious if either of you have thoughts on how to reconcile this framework with emergent trends around decentralized, non-hierarchical organizing?

0:56:04 SS: Can you read that one more time, I'm sorry.

0:56:06 TT: Sure. Do either of you have thoughts on how to reconcile this cycle of engagement framework with emergent trends around decentralized and non-hierarchical organizing?

0:56:20 SS: So I think non-hierarchical organizations have really always had a great alternative to many of the things that... It's many... It's of exactly these issues around consensus-based models, people by definition get heard and can feel empowered if they know they... They know they have a chance to influence a decision. Then of course, that's a closer feeling of empowerment. But I think then there have been obviously critiques, academic and experiential ones by people who've experienced organizations of those models where sometimes the critique that they can be less efficient or that there are certain other kinds of personality-based organizing patterns that can come out where people who are more vocal or more extroverted sometimes fare better in that model, than people who are more introverted and don't wanna speak up every time. So there are critiques. But I think certainly those kinds of organizations with more radical participation get at improving many of the problems that we see with current organizational patterns, like not feel empowered or you have a say over what the activities are and...

0:57:38 SS: So I think there's so much to learn, and I frankly, just at a macro level, I'm not here to say which one is right, I don't know. I think we are just at such a big reflection point in the society as a whole, that I think that is exactly the right kind of question. And find out what can we learn from other models. Obviously, mutual aid societies are having a total resurgence in organic creation, like mutual aid societies are popping up all across the country, and those are grounded in radical participation from the community, non-hierarchical. And so I think there is a lot. I've actually spent the last few months during COVID really digging into mutual aid societies and paying attention to what's kind of going on with that right now. So I think there is a lot to learn from that, no doubt. And I certainly can't say what the answer is, but I think we should definitely be paying attention to any models that are ultimately more inclusive and allow people to feel more empowered.

0:58:35 TT: Yeah, one more question here before we wrap up. I'm sorry, did I cut you off, Chris, were you about to say something about that last point?

0:58:44 CS: I was gonna add a little bit just to say that inherently the model, the framework... Sorry, the cycle is a framework which tries to look at how we do these things in a decentralized way, away from just organizations asking people to do things and really focusing on how do you get people to feel empowered to act on their own. Again, as Sarah mentioned, the way that we actually used this was to build a software platform that really tried to scale decentralized individual actions that anyone could take, no matter if they were a member of a certain organisation or a volunteer on a certain campaign for office. It was simply anyone who had a smartphone could go to the app store and get this app to actually do something. And so I think that that is truly inherent in the way that we built this. And our job for those of us who work, part of the sort of legacy historic organizations is to think about how we interact with this rethinking of how people engage with the civic arena as

individuals.

0:59:56 TT: Thanks. We've got just a couple of minutes left, but I wanted to make sure I get in this last question here, do you see the burnout issues more acute during this stressful time, and what can people do to recover?

1:00:14 SS: Chris, would you like to go first? Or you want me to jump in? Okay, I'll jump in. I would say yes. Just observationally, yes. I think one of the things that's going on is that we're just having this collective crisis moment. And we all know what that's like when we have an individual one, but now we're kind of all going through it at the same time. And we're having different experiences and impacting people differently, but it's all kind of happening to all of us at the same time. So yes, I absolutely believe that it is creating a more stressful time, in part because of that compounding nature and that yes, I think burnout is probably more of a risk in this time than others. I would say that can you do to recover, is a lot of... Well, frankly, probably a lot of the things that you all are working on at the Wellbeing Blueprint, I would think. And certainly a lot of the place... A lot of the points that this work points to, like deepening relationships, allowing opportunities for people to tap in and tap out. We can feel like we can tap in and tap out when we know other people have our back, that if I go away for the weekend, a month, two months, whatever it is, people are gonna be there to carry the movement forward. I know they've got my back, that kind of thing.

1:01:29 SS: So I think... And that coupled with much of what the wellbeing work that you all are doing, I'm sure it's very important. And Chris, I know you had thoughts about this kind of potential for burnout in this moment. You were kind of reflecting when we spoke earlier, I don't know if any of that feels relevant to this question.

1:01:45 CS: Yeah, I was just thinking about how we saw again, this research began because of what we saw earlier around the Women's March in January 2017, and that kind of historic uptick in engagement. We all lived through a similar moment in May and June when we saw historic turnout on the streets. And I think that this is, again, is showing us that people showed up, people were angry enough to come out and march. And I think that many of them are probably wondering right now, "Well, what else is there for me to do? What else can I do? How do I stay engaged if I'm tired of marching or as the weather changes or as it becomes more dangerous to be out there, frankly?" And so these are thoughts that we're currently sitting with, and hopefully many of us are sitting with right now, thinking about where do we go from here, and hopefully this provides a little bit of a starting point to think about that.

1:02:40 TT: And if Sarah or Chris, you can indulge me for one minute, there was just one more question, although it disappeared so maybe somebody answered it.

1:02:53 SS: I just answered.

1:02:54 TT: Oh did you. Okay, wonderful, thank you. Thank you, thank you. Thank you, Sarah. Thank you, Chris. This has been wonderful. In the leading up to this event and the conversations and planning, and we think there's some alignment here and that this could be of interest, and now going through the full presentation, there's definitely so much correlation to what we're trying to do with the Wellbeing Blueprint and with how we think about wellbeing and people's sense of belonging and the importance of relationships, truly being an essential elements of wellbeing. I know as part of the Wellbeing Blueprint, I think we're gonna be looking at the cycle of engagement and that whole approach to how can we incorporate that and use that in terms of advancing the Wellbeing Blueprint and the principles and actions and recommendations there.

Cycle of Engagement Audio

1:03:57 TT: I hope everybody who joined us today is really looking at how you can use this framework and the work that you're doing, and the collective work that we hope that all of you all are joining us in as part of the Wellbeing Blueprint community. So thank you all so much for taking time out of your day to join us. We've got other events that you'll see information on shortly, so please join us for those that are upcoming end of this month and into October. Thank you again, Sarah and Chris for joining us today. Have a great day, everybody.

1:04:30 SS: Thank you so much. Thank you for having us.

1:04:32 CS: Thank you.