



# Community Conversations on Principled Innovation



## MORAL

**MORAL** character supports decision making from multiple perspectives, allowing one to honestly evaluate situations with open-mindedness, integrity, equity, and justice in order to respond in a meaningful and responsible manner

**Assets include:** empathy, compassion, fairness, gratitude, and humility



## CIVIC

**CIVIC** character is a commitment to the public good through one's own local, national, and global awareness and engagement. Civic character drives the commitment to address and challenge systemic problems to improve the well-being of others.

**Assets include:** service and action orientation, civility, perspective-taking, inclusive and collaborative spirit



## INTELLECTUAL

**INTELLECTUAL** character enables individuals to become innovative, creative, and critical thinkers who value quality of information in seeking the truth and strengthening society. Intellectual character supports informed learning and utilizing data and evidence to think critically and challenge the status quo in order to effect systemic change.

**Assets include:** critical thinking, problem-solving, and truth-seeking



## PERFORMANCE

**PERFORMANCE** character, when informed by intellectual, civic, and moral assets, enables individuals to navigate uncertainty, anticipate and mitigate intended and unintended consequences, and work collaboratively to design and implement creative and effective solutions to the toughest social and educational challenges.

**Assets include:** initiative, creativity, courage, perseverance, resilience, and risk-taking

# Community Conversations on Principled Innovation

Friday, November 15, 2024

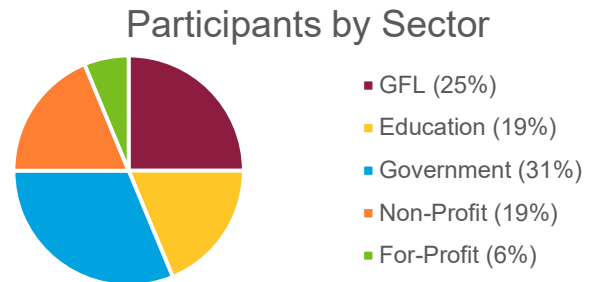
8 a.m. – 12 p.m.

University Club, ASU at the Tempe campus

33 Respondents

20 Registrants

16 Participants across 4 Sectors



The Global Futures Office of Research Development and Strategy (GFORDS) hosted a workshop designed to foster future collaborations by engaging with internal and external participants on their understanding of Principled Innovation (PI), Responsible Innovation (RI), and cognate concepts. The goal was to begin to explore how ASU can better engage with and support participants in these areas, especially in relation to environmental and societal challenges like sustainability innovation. The workshop was funded through the allocation that the College of Global Futures received from Principled Innovation.

## Process

The workshop introduced the participants to PI as a new element in ASU's identity, as part of the design aspirations, and as emanating from the Charter. It emphasized that PI is a fluid and evolving framework for decision-making, and that it may be a useful tool for helping to improve the way that ASU interacts with community members and organizations.

## Session One

Session one used the Principled Innovation card deck to explore a framing question in light of PI's four character assets: Moral, Civic, Intellectual and Performance. For each character asset, participants spent 3-4 minutes in self-reflection and 9-10 minutes in dialogue at their table, addressing the following framing question:

**ASU's newly funded Southwest Sustainability Innovation Engine (SWSIE) envisions a thriving future for Arizona and the greater southwest as a place of green innovation around energy, water and carbon. We would like you to consider how you and your organization might engage with this vision.**

**Consider the four values and eight practices communicated by the card deck. Which of these practices are you and your organization **comfortable with currently**, and which would **benefit from building** more or different relationships with ASU, in the context of advancing Sustainability Innovation?**

For each character asset, we asked participants: On a scale of 1-5, with one being least and five being most, how pressing is it for ASU to attend to this value in its community relationships?

## Moral Character Asset

With respect to the Moral character asset, our partners discussed their own various missions to address stakeholders – from specific populations to broad and varied populations – and the tension of doing that work when political cycles are much shorter than the timelines required for transformative work. From such discussions emerged the suggestion that ASU could serve as a neutral convener, ensuring the inclusion of these populations.

Because of the nature of their work, these partners are attuned to the need for building public trust and respecting the humanity and diversity of the communities we serve. An additional complication with respect to building trust was that government, by nature, does not always acknowledge harms and unintended consequences. This perspective yielded two ideas: First, that ASU has work to do in building trust with the community, and second that ASU can help provide education and tools to partners around Principled Innovation.

- How pressing is it for ASU to attend to this value in its community relationships? **4.5**

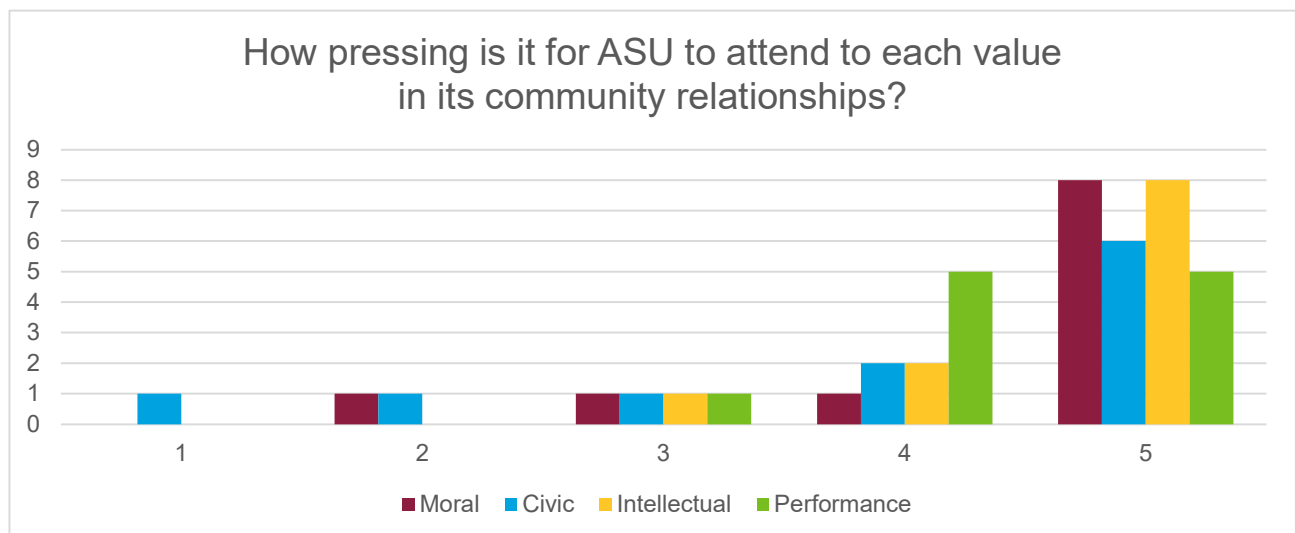
## Civic Character Asset

With respect to the Civic character asset, a common theme was the necessity of meeting decision-makers where they are. This effort requires understanding the unique cultures of each community and the contexts and constraints of each agency. It also means being physically present within those communities and agencies. To do this, ASU might embed people within partner organizations to learn about and inform how they do their work, including how they engage with the populations they serve.

ASU's civic duty is to "make it easy" for the community. This might include free, family-friendly demonstrations and fairs. ASU can also publish its work in formats that are accessible to policy- and decision-makers. Related terms for ASU's role related to the Civic character asset included "translation," "liaison," and "connector."

An additional thread of dialogue was around funding. It takes resources to engage citizen experts and develop new, innovative solutions, and cities in particular are not typically eligible to receive grant and philanthropic funding. It was suggested that ASU might partner with cities to approach funders together.

- How pressing is it for ASU to attend to this value in its community relationships? **4.0**



## Intellectual Character Asset

In dialogue around the Intellectual character asset, the idea again emerged that ASU should serve as a neutral and stable provider of information in a world of constant change – that is, change in knowledgeable staff, change in priorities, and change in political will. For example, ASU can serve as a “think tank,” doing the research that allows us to bring multiple and even competing sources of data to bear on decision-making. ASU should also design its publications for use by policy- and decision-makers.

Additionally, participants said that ASU should provide space that facilitates contributions from and listens compassionately to people in specific geographies who have lived experience and deep personal and cultural knowledge, regardless of whether they have a college degree. This requires an openness to accept and value criticism and must include intentional outreach and engagement activities, as well as welcoming and accessible physical spaces outside of the ASU campuses, and particularly in rural areas.

- How pressing is it for ASU to attend to this value in its community relationships? **4.6**

## Performance Character Asset

Dialogue around the Performance character asset focused on navigating uncertainty and mitigating consequences. ASU can take a longer and more systematic, holistic view. It can facilitate anticipatory dialogues and scenario planning. It can set performance indicators, helping our partners start with the end in mind. It can make space for creativity and co-development – spending time thinking before moving to action.

A quick win in this space might be to create a borrowing library of shade and cooling structures.

- How pressing is it for ASU to attend to this value in its community relationships? **4.4**

## Vote With Your Feet

Asked to “vote with their feet” and select one character asset that is most pressing, the room was evenly divided, reflecting a general agreement among participants that all four values are pressing.

Asked “why is this character asset most pressing,” responses included the following.

**Moral:** This character asset is embedded in all the others. The university should be thinking about who and what it is putting first. It needs to get over the “scarcity mindset” of competing for resources. Integrity should be modeled as a core value in ASU’s decision-making.

**Civic:** Governments serve all swaths of the region and residents of all types. ASU’s civic responsibility is to serve as a neutral third-party convener.

**Intellectual:** ASU’s responsibility as an educational institution is to educate the community, educate the workforce, educate its own employees. The respondent emphasized that ASU must “teach the why.”

**Performance:** The incentive for community partners is often short-term wins, rather than a long-term view. ASU can help its partners optimize performance for the long-term.



## Session Two

Session two used PI as a lens through which small groups considered how, and to what extent, PI can help ASU meet its commitment to two design aspirations: “Be Socially Embedded” and “Conduct Use-Inspired Research.” Participants were also asked to consider how ASU handles situations where ASU/partner values are not necessarily in alignment and how ASU fosters a sense of shared purpose.

With respect to **social embeddedness**, participants told us that ASU has not gone deep into the community to build trust. They asked, “where is the front door?”

To succeed, ASU must understand the constraints of stakeholders and how their work is structured. What needs could ASU fill for them – and what needs could partner organizations fill for ASU? They said, “meet people where they are.”

Participants said that PI aligns with community needs. “If ASU applies PI in every aspect of its work, it will be socially embedded.”

Regarding **use-inspired research**, participants said ASU can communicate clearly with partners about their goals to ensure that research is truly use-inspired. Additionally, the university can do better in translating their work for a public audience.

Such better work might include creating liaison positions – perhaps clinical professors – supported by dedicated financial resources and an incentive structure that supports and rewards faculty experts doing this work.

Additionally, Principled Innovation will take time to become part of ASU’s culture. ASU can teach PI to incoming faculty to give them the tools to understand and serve partner needs. “Go slow to go fast.”

### Be socially embedded

ASU connects with communities through mutually beneficial partnerships.

- How/to what extent can PI help ASU be more socially embedded?
- Consider: How does ASU handle situations where our values don’t align with a community partner’s?

### Conduct use-inspired research

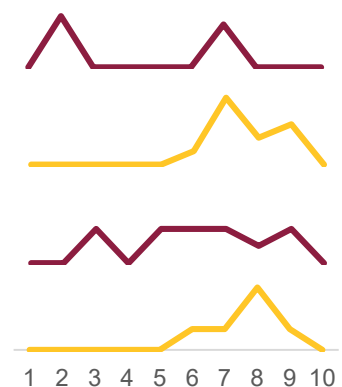
ASU research has purpose and impact.

- How/to what extent can PI help ASU conduct use-inspired research?
- Consider: How does ASU foster a sense of shared purpose and collective impact?

## Vote With Your Feet

Asked to “vote with their feet,” participants answered four questions on a scale from 1-10. Their average response is bolded. The colored sparklines give a sense of the distribution of responses.

- How effective is ASU in “being socially embedded,” that is, “connecting with communities through mutually beneficial partnerships” serving the community? **4.3**
- To what extent do you think the PI framework might help? **7.6**
- How effective is ASU in “conducting use-inspired research,” that is, “research that has a purpose and impact”? **6.2**
- To what extent do you think the PI framework might help? **7.7**



## Final Plenary

The final plenary discussion provided the opportunity for participants to share their understanding of PI in relation to ASU's charter, potential gaps in how PI can support the charter, and how ASU can be more inclusive and encouraging of community collaborations.

### Question 1

On the question of “what’s missing,” discussion focused on several aspects of how ASU can better serve the community.

First, participants agreed that funding and incentives are lacking. They recommend we consider dedicated staff and/or embedded faculty liaisons, as well as a modified tenure structure that incentivizes community engagement and co-development. Additionally, they agreed that ASU leadership must model using the PI approach in developing these incentives.

Second, ASU can assist with the methodology of iterative co-development, including implementation of change management. Both of these topics are embedded in the science of Project Management.

A third topic of discussion here was that ASU can function as a pilot or demonstration facility – a necessary step to persuade our partners’ funders to move from “best available technology” (which is often yesterday’s tech) to innovative new technologies.

Finally, there was recognition that ASU is a big place, and the rules of its professional departments – especially HR and accounting – sometimes hinder community-engaged work.

### Question 2

On the question of how ASU can be more open and inviting, a phrase came to mind that was also a takeaway from the 2004 Temozón report – this work requires a central place to convene. Other related terms offered by the participants included: third space, satellite, front door, inclusive, dialogue, exchange relationship, listening, a more porous university, not lead but follow.

Here, too, was the reminder that ASU must conduct its outreach with the goal of understanding the context and constraints of its partners. It must go out with its “palms down.”

## Summative Questions

### Question 1

Given ASU's charter and its responsibility to the communities it serves, are there responsibilities ASU has to the community that the Principled Innovation framework doesn't account for?

### Question 2

How should we ensure that ASU is being open and inviting to its community partners?

# Findings and Next Steps

Community participants articulated their desire for ASU's role to be a **stable source of knowledge** in an ever-changing world of frequent employee turnover, short political cycles, and readjusting priorities. To mitigate unintended consequences of innovation, this knowledge should take an anticipatory and longer perspective, rather than focusing on the short-term gains.

Another role for ASU, the participants agreed, was to be a **neutral convener, connector, and translator**, building trust among the worlds of academia, policymakers and citizens. To be successful at this role will require an investment of resources to build this “front door to ASU” infrastructure, including dedicated staff to make the connections, faculty incentives for participation in the work, and neutral spaces to convene at ASU and satellite locations beyond.

Participants acknowledged the need for ASU to **build trust and stronger relationships** with under-served communities before taking on a convening role. They were also interested in exploring expanded **ASU partnerships with local government agencies** beyond a sustainability focus, with a goal of understanding and addressing the agencies' unique context and constraints.

Finally, addressing the **challenges of funding co-development** was a topic of consideration. Generally, funders want to support the best available existing technology rather than unknown outcomes of innovation and co-development. ASU can advance an iterative, “agile” methodology, including aspects of change management that are part of this methodology. It can serve as a demonstration testbed. Additionally, we must move from a scarcity mindset of competing for resources to one of collaborative abundance – we are stronger when we work together.

## Action Items for ASU

- Model Principled Innovation in decision-making
- Educate our own employees on Principled Innovation
- Dedicate resources to create embedded liaison positions
- Provide incentives for faculty to engage in this work
- Create neutral spaces embedded in communities
- Welcome criticism, listen compassionately
- Act as a neutral third-party convener
- Serve as an implementation testbed
- Teach partners how to optimize their performance for the long term
- Advance agile methodologies for co-development and change management
- Customize publications for use by decision-makers



# The Practices of Principled Innovation®

Four interconnected clusters of character assets - **moral, civic, intellectual, and performance** - are developed over one's lifetime through self-reflection, working with others, and learning through experiences. The eight practices of Principled Innovation are demonstrations of the assets in action.

As students, faculty, staff, and community members work collaboratively to innovate and make decisions that affect the lives and learning of others, the practices of Principled Innovation help ensure that their decisions and actions are meeting the social, cultural, emotional, and educational needs of those affected while creating positive change for humanity.

## What is Principled Innovation®?

Principled Innovation is the ability to imagine new concepts, catalyze ideas, and form new solutions guided by principles that create positive change for humanity.

The question, “We can innovate, but should we?” places values and ethical understandings – our own character – at the core of the practice.

Through Principled Innovation, we hold ourselves accountable to design and deliver excellent learning opportunities for all learners, preparing them to be collaborative and ethical contributors to their communities and a thriving civil society.



# The eight practices of Principled Innovation

are demonstrations of the assets in action.



## Moral

*Guides decision-making with open-mindedness, integrity, and justice*

- **Identify and acknowledge fundamental values.**

Distinguish the values that are important to the individuals, team, community and learning environment and ensure that the process, structures, and solutions honor, appreciate, and reflect the identified values.

- **Utilize moral and ethical decision-making.**

Use a values-informed reflective process to assess possibilities, navigate dilemmas, and make the best possible choice to serve the needs of the individual, team, community and learning environment.



## Civic

*Supports collaboration to address systemic problems for the public good*

- **Understand culture and context.**

Use evidence-based resources, empathy, reflective questioning, and asset-based appreciative inquiry to fully understand and assess the lived and current experiences and circumstances of individuals, communities, and learning environments.

- **Engage multiple and diverse perspectives.**

Seek and champion equitable and inclusive involvement and contribution to the process, including many different voices who have a variety of lived experiences, beliefs, backgrounds, and cultural wealth.



## Intellectual

*Informs problem-solving by combining creativity, evidence, and critical thinking*

- **Develop habits of an informed systems thinker.**

Use evidence-based resources and data to inform flexible thinking and appreciation of emerging insights and multiple perspectives, allowing one to recognize how the individual parts are influenced by their environment and interact to form a complex whole.

- **Reflect critically and compassionately.**

Use a growth mindset to make meaning of experiences through contemplation and consideration of one's thoughts, feelings, and actions and how they affect the growth, development, and identity of the individual, team, community, and learning environment.



## Performance

*Enables navigation of uncertainty with initiative, courage, and resilience*

- **Design creative solutions.**

Work collaboratively and intentionally for and with the community to define and understand the problem; then generate and catalyze purposeful, innovative ideas to achieve a desired outcome that creates positive change for humanity.

- **Navigate uncertainty and mitigate consequences.**

Guide the decision-making process through observation and reflective questioning that helps to imagine and effectively respond to the possible outcomes. Allow space for meaningful action to increase the chance for desired results and reduce the risk of harm to individuals, teams, communities, and learning environments.