

# Transforming Systems Forum: Starter Guide

Please read the following ahead of the Forum.

## About the Forum

The Forum is **part of an ongoing collective inquiry process** about systems transformation. We know that we need to (re) discover and design more transformative ways of creating change to meet the complex challenges of our time. We also know that while there are strengths, bright spots and different knowledges to help us navigate the way, this is ultimately a collective discovery process: to inquire into, experiment and learn about how we work in more transformative ways across issues of local and national importance.

The **mission** of the Forum is to support learning, connection, and action for people working collaboratively to transform and/or strengthen systems for an equitable and inclusive future.

Our **purpose** is to understand the promising practices and enabling conditions for transforming systems to be more equitable.

We will be inquiring together through the lenses of:

- How we approach strategy, evaluation and leadership
- Systems at different scales: organisational, collaboration (including defined by place or issue), and at a field level or national level.
- The practices and 'social infrastructure' required next to work in more transformative ways across these scales.

We have intentionally convened a group of 45 people with different roles in the 'field' including from philanthropy, community, government, intermediaries, community services, researchers and evaluators. In common, we are working to shift systems to be more equitable at a local, regional, national level – and in the spaces between.

Our invitation is to form new relationships and deepen existing ones. That through our relationships we develop a shared purpose and connectivity to support our ongoing collective inquiry, learning and influencing beyond the Forum.



## How it will work

The **collective learning process** at the Forum will be guided by a set of inquiry questions, for us to generate a better understanding of the nature of transformative change in practice and identify what is needed to support it in the Australian context. The overarching question framing the Forum is:

**What practices and infrastructure are being called for to transform systems for an equitable and inclusive future?**

Across the two days we will explore, test, and refine this together. We'll progress the answering of some of the questions we are showing up with, and leave with the next step questions that we will continue to learn into.

Our facilitators (**Mark Yettica-Paulson, Anna Powell, Mark Cabaj and Jess Dart**) will hold the process and share their insights along the way. **Guest contributors** will share stories and examples from different contexts, and all of us are invited to be both contributors and learners.

The **framing** is that the long emergency and increasing complexity calls us to use multiple entry points and models of change. When we have an agenda to change or transform systems - particularly to make the systems we are part of more equitable - we are calling ourselves and those we work with into a different way of working. One that is more systemic, learning centred, experimental and at times deliberately disruptive. To navigate our way, we need to collectively and dynamically reflect, learn, and co-generate ways to deepen our practice and influence. The right social and technological infrastructure to support this will be a precondition for bringing about transformative change at different scales.

The **starting point** will be sharing what we know so far about the nature and archetypes of transformative change (e.g. reform, systems, transformational) and what it looks like across strategy/design, evaluation and leadership - to locate where we are at now and how we got here. While we'll talk across scales, the majority of the focus is at the cross-organisational and systems level - where we are still working it out.

**Day 1** has a focus on transformative practice across the nexus of strategy, evaluation and leadership. **Day 2** dives into what we need to enable this across scales and places.

There'll be opportunities to exchange and translate the collective learnings back to our own contexts to **inform our next step actions**.

The agenda will be shared in the week of the event.



## Your participation

**The invitation** to participate is to be part of the inquiry, as a knowledge holder and learner, to grapple together with what the inquiry questions mean for ourselves, peers, and contexts.

The Forum learning process calls on you/us to be brave enough to lean into challenging learning experiences both as an individual and a group. Working within an inquiry process you will have opportunities to 'show up' as leaders in different ways: practice-based and lived experience knowledge holder, facilitator, thought leader; learner, questioner, critical-friend, creator, cross-pollinator, dreamer. We anticipate that as we form and mature as a group, people will move between these types of leadership (and others) fluidly.

**You and we will be encouraged** to (1) build our own reflections, ideas and practices based on stories and propositions during the sessions in a way that (2) builds individual and collective agency and (3) can contribute to more documented insights for the ecosystem (via CFI sharing).

## Suggested reading

We encourage you to read the [Discovery Report /Shaping Innovation Futures](#) produced by Griffith Centre for Systems Innovation as background reading. The report was released June 2023 and shares insights from a discovery process about systems innovation in practice and the conditions needed to accelerate equitable systems.

It offers relevant context to the questions explored at the Forum and allows us to harness these recent learnings.