

CRISES AS A CATALYST 2.0

*A Toolkit for Thriving
Through Uncertainty*

WORKBOOK SERIES

A toolkit to support navigating uncertainty

OPENING

proinspire.org



Before you begin, take a breath.

Notice what you are carrying in this moment. These words are for you and for the communities you love and serve. You deserve space to settle, reflect, and feel supported.

INTRODUCTION

Times of crisis challenge social sector leaders in extraordinary ways. The unprecedented circumstances brought forth by COVID-19 and the global uprising for Black lives in 2020 called on each of us to reflect individually, support one another collectively, and intentionally adapt our leadership to meet the demands of the moment. In that crucible, Crises as a Catalyst emerged, a call to evolve our leadership practices toward a long-term vision of a world, free from systemic oppression and rooted in racial equity, where all people thrive.

Now, several years later, the conditions have shifted, yet the need for courageous leadership remains. Crises as a Catalyst 2.0 is a response to a new set of converging crises that require not only reflection, but transformation. Across the social sector, we are witnessing three interconnected patterns that are shaping the landscape of equity and justice work.

THREE CRISES WE ARE NAVIGATING

The Crisis of Disinvestment and Downsizing

A quiet but deliberate pullback from racial justice commitments, the erosion of equity-centered infrastructure, and a return to risk-averse funding that sidelines liberatory work. This climate can trigger scarcity, fear, and self-doubt. The path through scarcity leads to abundance, which invites curiosity, creativity, and a deeper recognition of the wisdom and resources within our communities.

The Crisis of Political Weaponization and Retaliation

A climate of heightened repression where BIPOC-led organizations, equity-centered leaders, and social movements face surveillance, legal threats, and public vilification. These conditions can create fear for safety and silence. The path through fear is solidarity. By joining in community, practicing collective care, and using our voices together, we strengthen our capacity to resist repression and remain rooted in justice.

The Crisis of Uncertainty and Volatile Change

Intentional destabilization, rapid shifts in political conditions, and emotional exhaustion are shaping every part of the social sector. The pace of change can pull leaders into reactivity and overwhelm. The path through volatility is creativity. Creativity invites intentionality, grounded action, and the imagination needed to navigate complexity and build futures rooted in collective liberation.

These crises are not isolated. They are intertwined expressions of structural racism and systems of control designed to fracture communities, weaken organizing efforts, and undermine movements for justice. Naming these crises clearly helps us see the conditions we are navigating, understand their impact on our communities, and choose responses that align with our values, our humanity, and our vision for the future.

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Across our conversations with leaders, we hear a common refrain. As one partner shared, *“There’s so much change happening all at once, and I am expected to do more with fewer resources, a smaller team, less time, and limited support.”* This story echoes across organizations, networks, philanthropic institutions, and community spaces.

If any part of this resonates in a tender way, pause. Take a breath. What you are feeling is real. You are not meant to carry it alone.

At ProInspire, we believe that these crises are deeply harmful, and they can also serve as catalysts for deeper transformation. They invite us to evolve how we understand power, how we work together, and how we care for ourselves and our communities. Times of crisis remind us that racial equity is not a moment. It is a sustained commitment to reshaping systems, redistributing resources, and ensuring safety for Black and Brown communities.

Crises as a Catalyst 2.0 builds on our commitment to model mindsets, practices, and behaviors that support equitable changes from self to systems. These learnings come from our work with leaders, nonprofit organizations, funders, and coalitions, and they reflect our collective desire for a sector where well-being, shared power, and belonging are seen as essential to lasting change.

ABOUT THE WORKBOOK SERIES

Crises as a Catalyst 2.0 is a toolkit of workbooks designed to support leaders, organizations, boards, and funders in navigating today's crises with intention, care, and alignment. These workbooks include reflection prompts and practices that can be used individually or collectively.

Each workbook can be used for personal reflection, team conversations, and community practices. ***We intend for them to be an invitation to move through crises in ways that inspire transformation and create conditions for thriving.***

ABOUT THE WORKBOOK SERIES

WORKBOOK 1: CULTIVATING INNER WELL-BEING

Focuses on reconnecting with one's physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual needs. Self reflection helps us challenge internalized narratives, reclaim our humanity, and lead with clarity and compassion.

WORKBOOK 2: BUILDING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

Focuses on strengthening connections across differences, practicing vulnerability, navigating conflict with care, and building the alignment needed for collective action.

WORKBOOK 3: VALUES-ALIGNED ACTIONS

Supports leaders in embodying equity, justice, and liberation through consistent behaviors, not just aspirations. Values-aligned action creates congruence between what we believe and how we show up.

WORKBOOK 4: BOARDS AND NARRATIVE POWER

Focuses on cultivating narrative strategy, storytelling, and spokesperson skills so that boards can represent organizations with clarity, courage, and integrity.

WORKBOOK 5: FUNDERS AND CREATIVE LEADERSHIP

Invites program officers and foundation staff to navigate uncertainty with imagination, experiment with equity-centered philanthropy, and build relationships rooted in trust.

WHO THESE WORKBOOKS ARE FOR

When we use the word “leader,” we mean anyone working in the social sector, regardless of title or position. This includes staff, volunteers, program managers, directors, organizers, board members, and funders. Leadership is not limited to positional authority and is embodied in anyone committed to building a more just, liberatory, and thriving world. It is a practice. Take from these workbooks what supports you.

While we use the term “workplace,” these workbooks apply to a range of settings, including nonprofits, movement organizations, foundations, and networks. We trust you to translate these tools into the context that fits your work.

This toolkit is an invitation to move beyond reaction and toward transformation. Whether you are an individual navigating burnout, an organization facing backlash, or a funder searching for alignment, these workbooks are here to support your journey.

Together, let us lead with care, act with courage, and design the future we deserve, where all people thrive.

A SHARED VISION FOR THE WORLD WE ARE CREATING

We believe it is possible and necessary to create a world where:

- Black people are valued, supported, and safe.
- People of Color can rest, play, lead, and dream without fear of erasure.
- Social sector organizations have the infrastructure, staffing, capacity, and resources they need to thrive.
- Communities are supported rather than extracted from.
- Everyone experiences belonging and dignity in systems shaped by equity.

As Octavia Butler reminds us, all that we touch, we change, and all that we change, changes us. The only lasting truth is change. We have the power to shape change together.

