Youth Climate Engagement Webinar

Critical Action Lab

June 12, 2024

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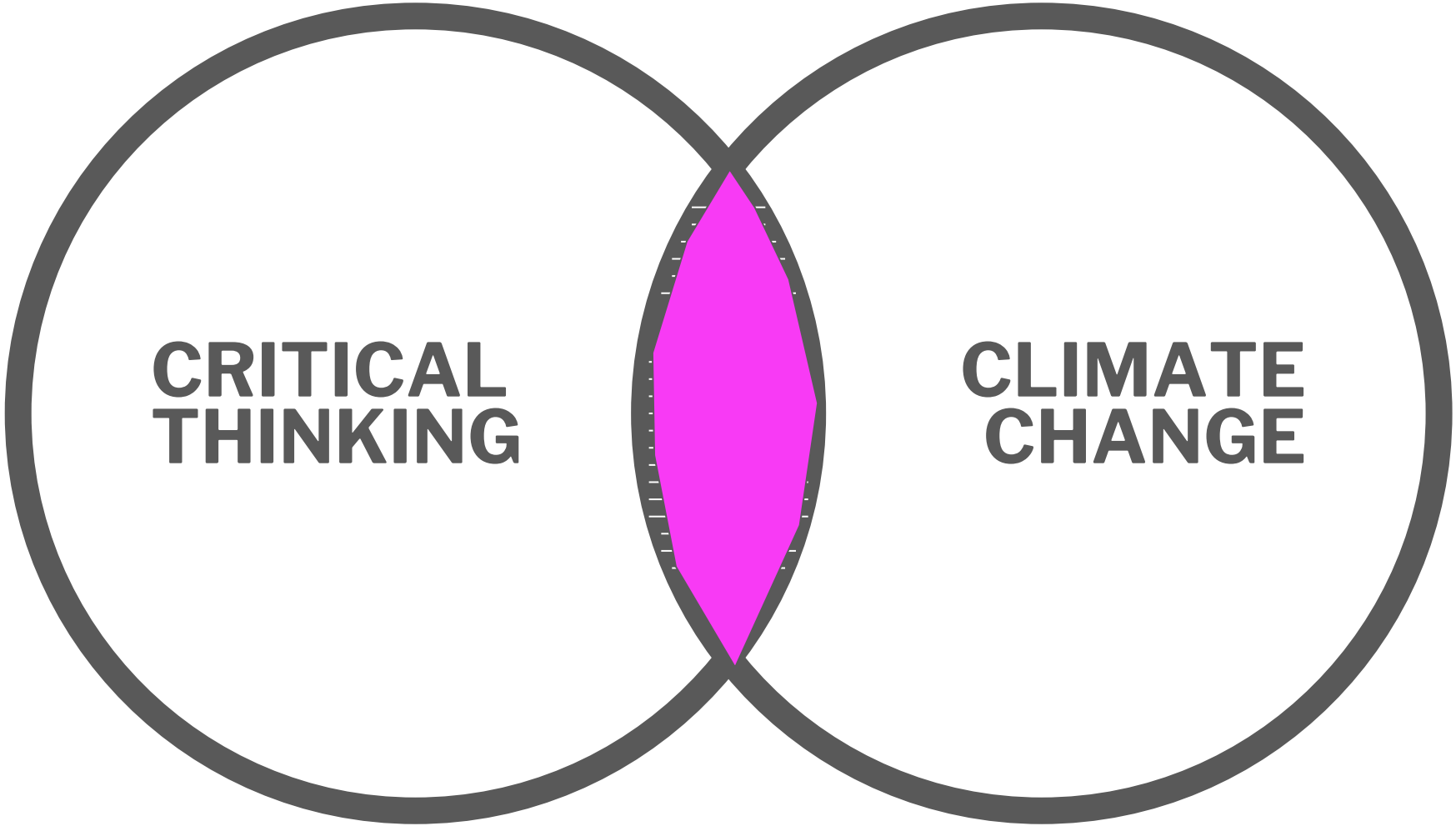
CRITICAL ACTION LAB

Experiments in community action

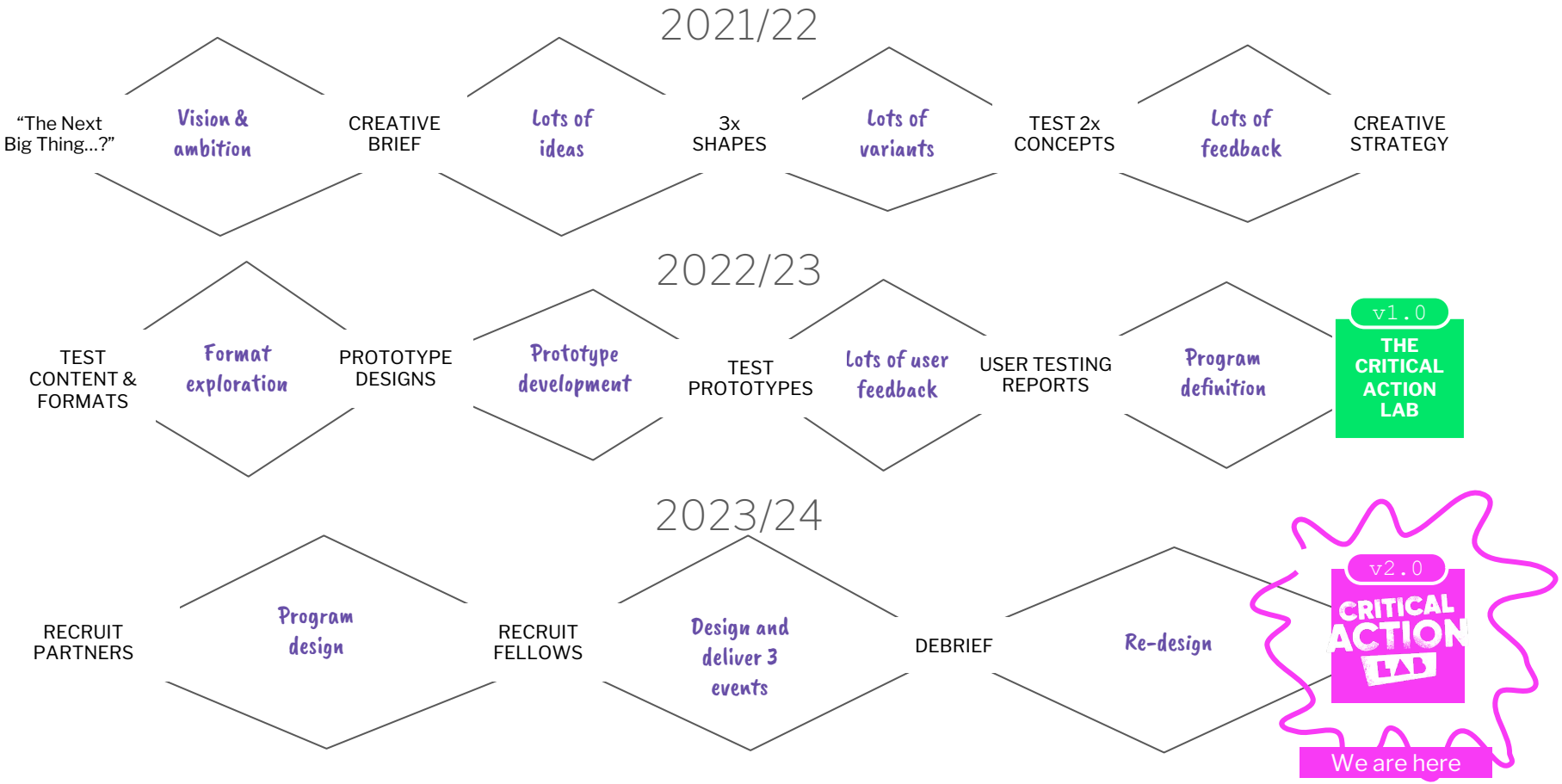
v2.0 / April 2024 / Ben Templeton

An international network of young leaders, supported by regional partners, showing how critical thinking can lead to more engaging, more effective community action.

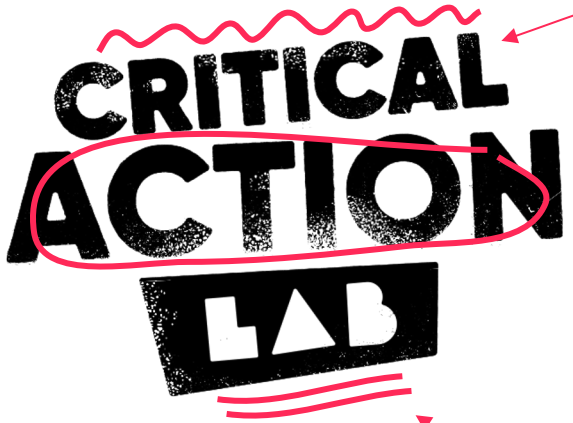
Mass Audubon · THE WILD CENTER · PHIPPS · NATURAL HISTORY MUSEUM OF UTAH · Rio Tinto Center | University of Utah · Rubber REPUBLIC · thoughtden.


CRITICAL
THINKING
CLIMATE
CHANGE

A journey of ‘diverge-converge’ design cycles



What's in a name?

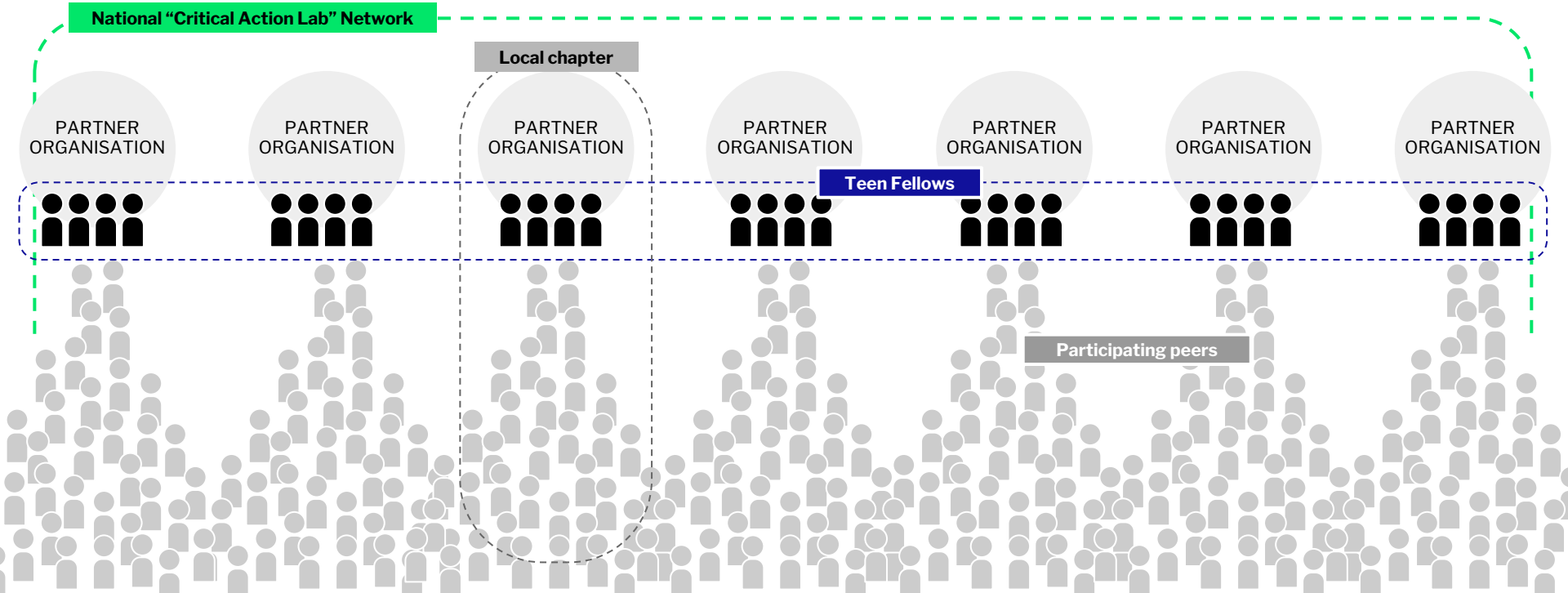


Thinking critically about the essential work that needs doing

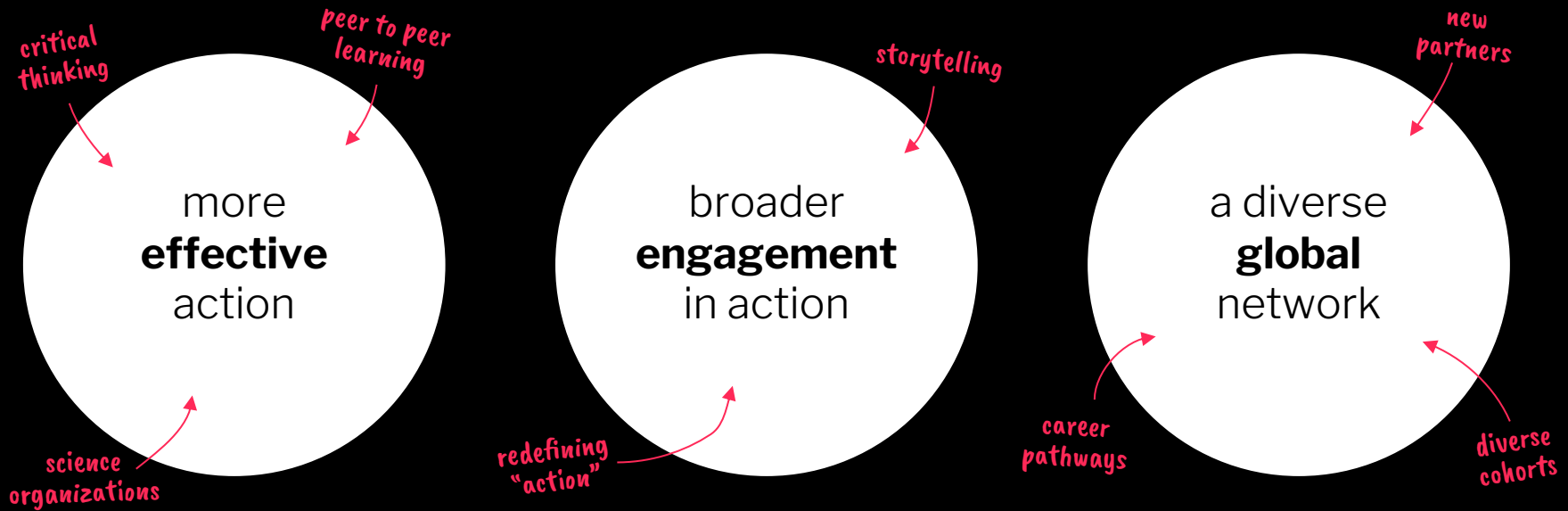
Exploring new and imaginative ways of taking real action together

Space to experiment with and share what works (and what doesn't)

A network of partners providing a platform for teens to build relationships and experiment with community action.



Goals of the Critical Action Lab

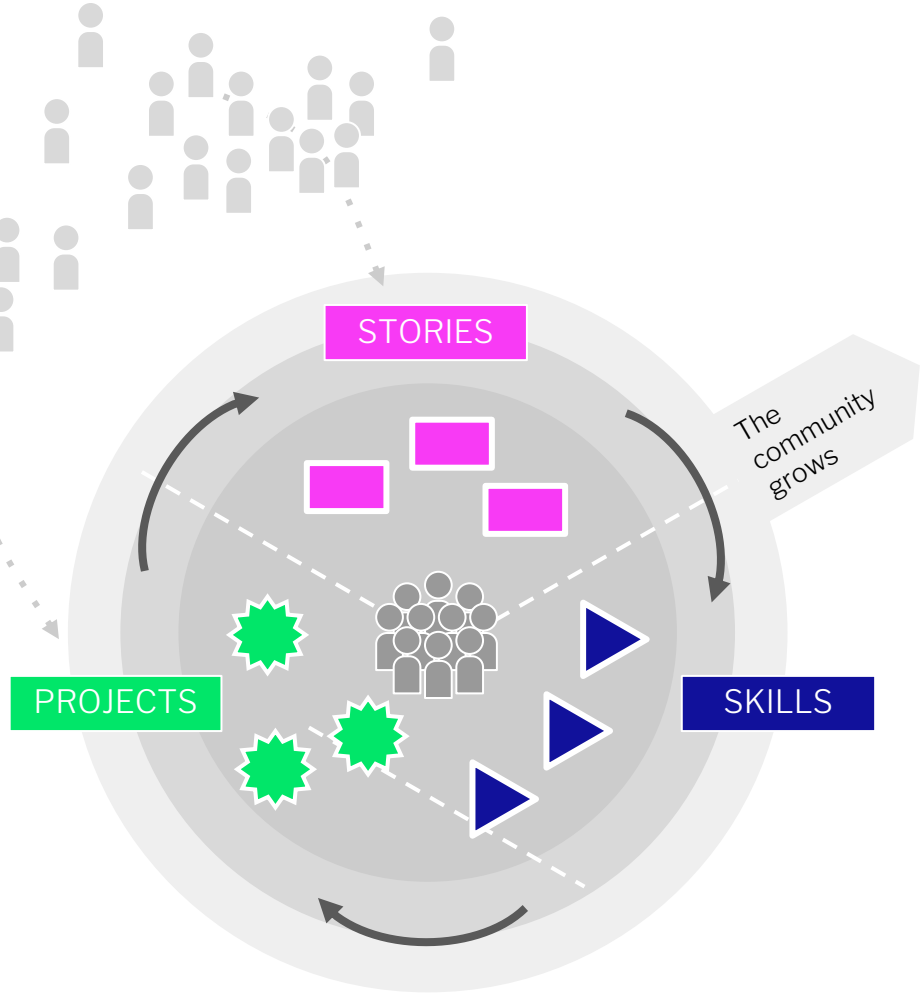


The strategy is a self-perpetuating cycle of inspiring stories, self-led learning and community action

STORIES that engage; inspiring media that tells the story of normal young people taking action in their communities
E.g. press, photos, videos, social media

SKILLS that support better thinking and more effective community action
E.g. Social game, workshops, peer review

PROJECTS that create connection, build resilience and become the source material for more stories to tell!
E.g. live events, citizen science studies



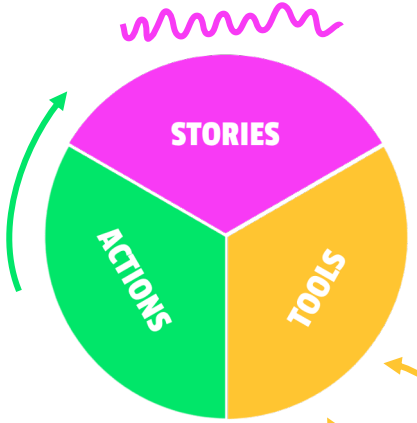
We've used the model in lots of different ways

Mapping design challenges

Which creative formats most effectively drive teen engagement?

Relationships between activities

Actions become the source for new inspiring stories



Deciding what "things"need making

A checklist

A "how to" video

A cheat sheet

Skills

Connect with Fellows to share and learn. Youth-led sessions, expert masterclasses and ‘just in time’ worksheets for sharper thinking and more effective action.

Key lessons!

Flexible tools

Optional; widely applicable; reflective not directive

Just in time tools

When I want it; for a specific need; easy to deploy

Youth-led skill sharing

Space to share their valuable experiences

Projects

Design and deliver actions in local communities around the world, from game nights and sustainable fashion shows to Youth Climate Summits and trash collection.

Key lessons!

Broader definitions

Lower barrier to entry; a mandate to experiment

Autonomy

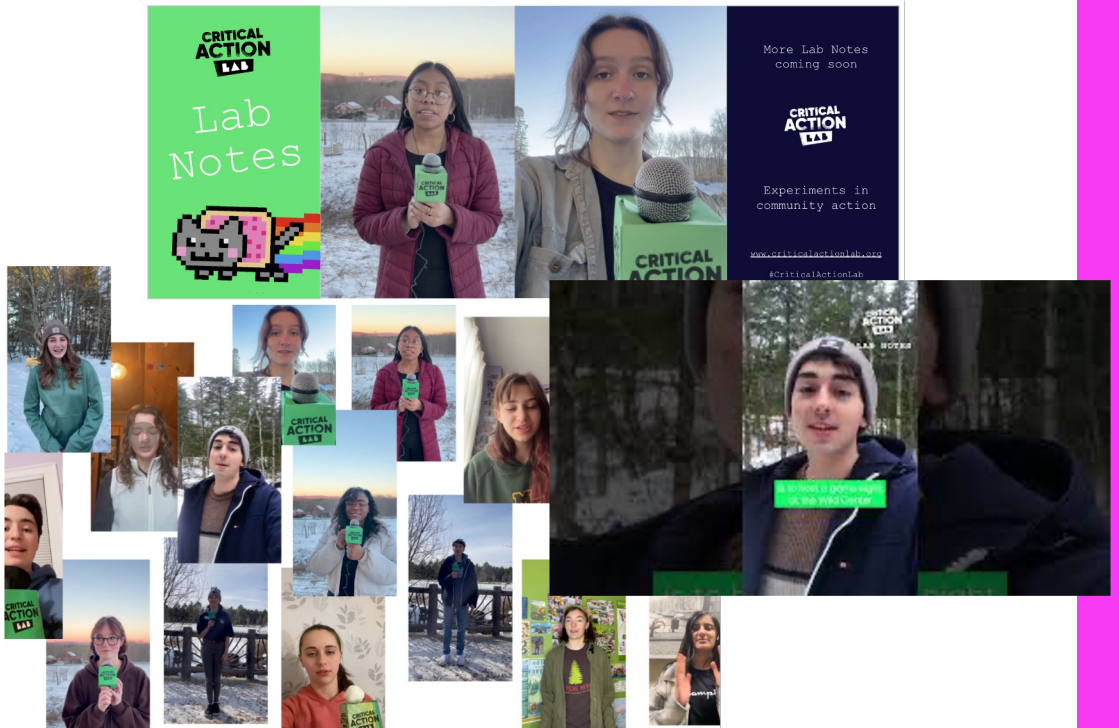
Give me space; give me control;

Support

Help me set clear goals; give me some constraints; help with the boring bits;

Stories

A big green microphone, some big questions and young people sharing the critical thinking and messy reality of collaborating to take action in their community.



Key lessons!

Power of story

Stories are everywhere; framing; emotion; inspiration

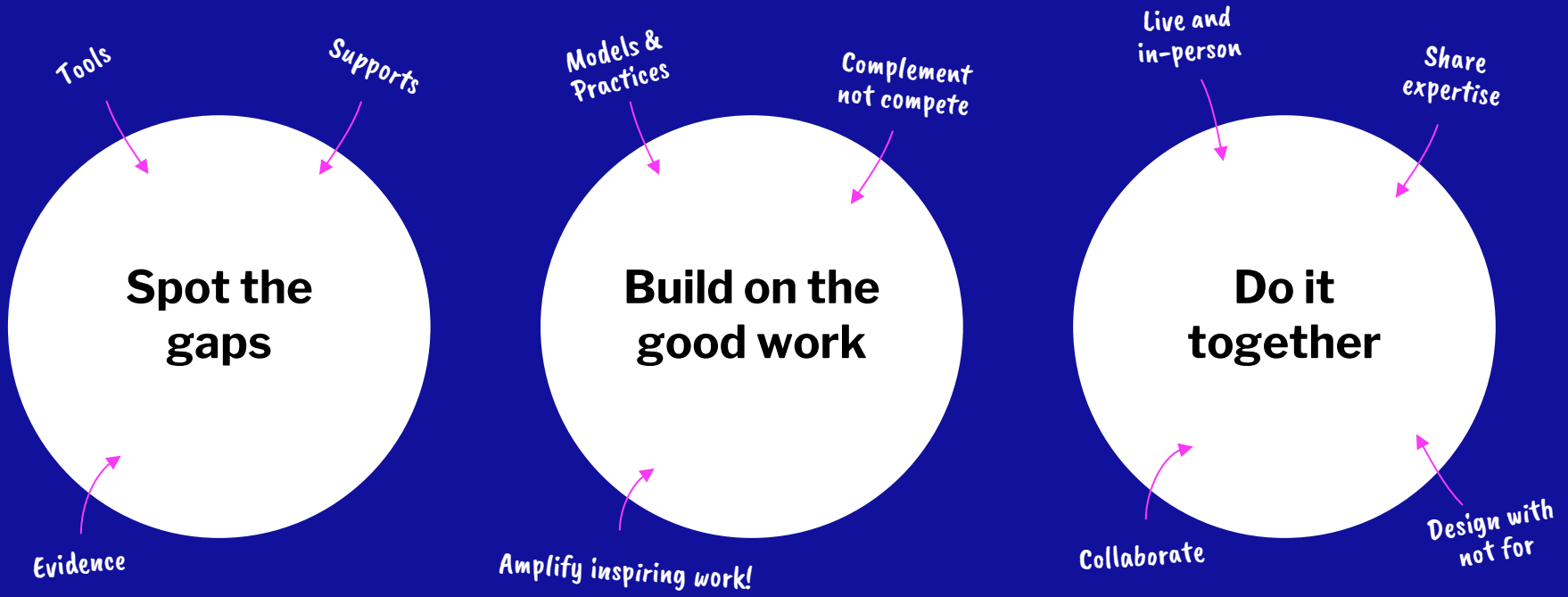
Finding a voice

Coaching; communication skills; self reflection

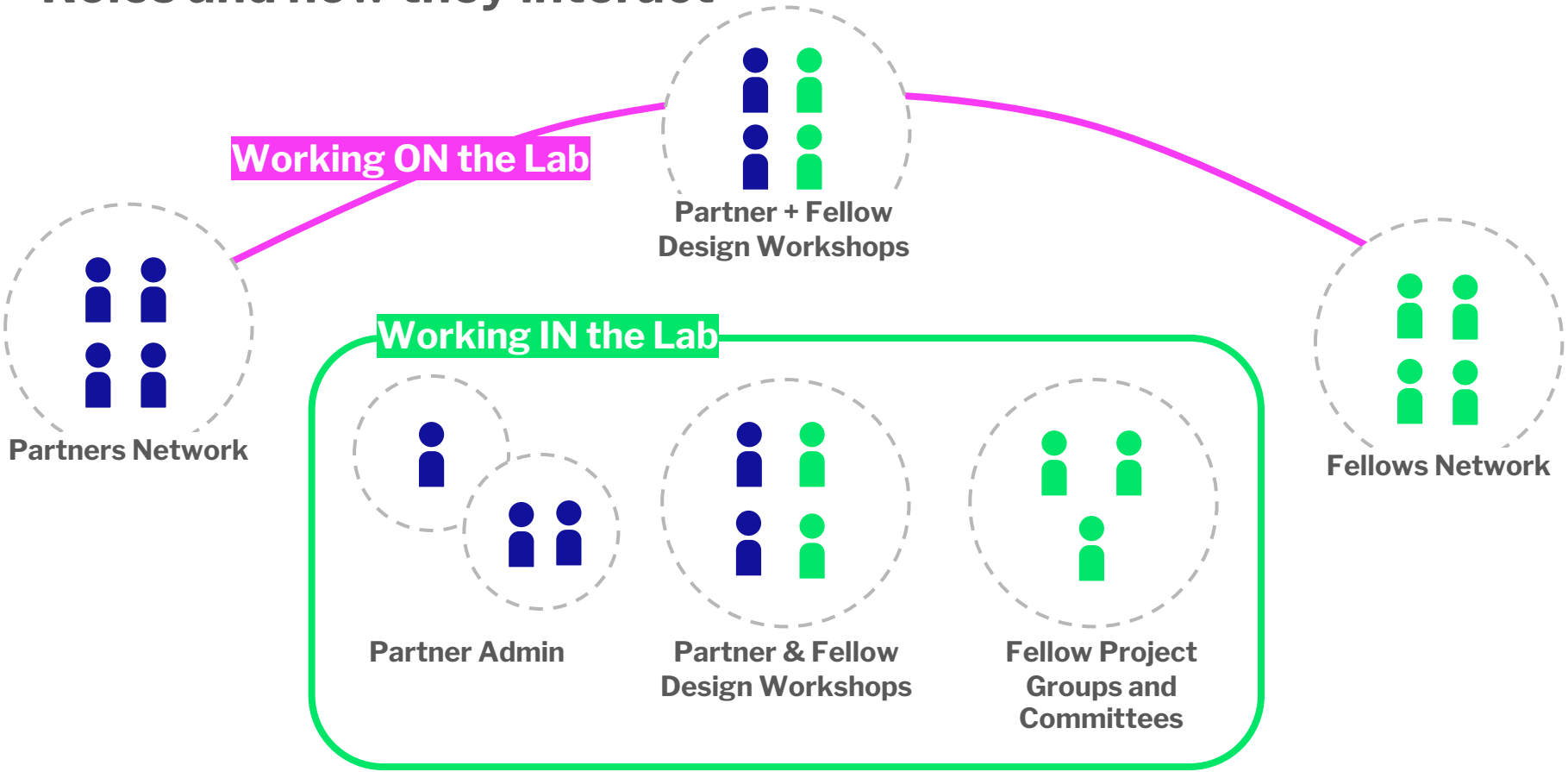
Format constraints

Big green mic (visual credentials); permission to be vulnerable; room to interpret

Ways of working



Roles and how they interact



The Fellow roles

Project work

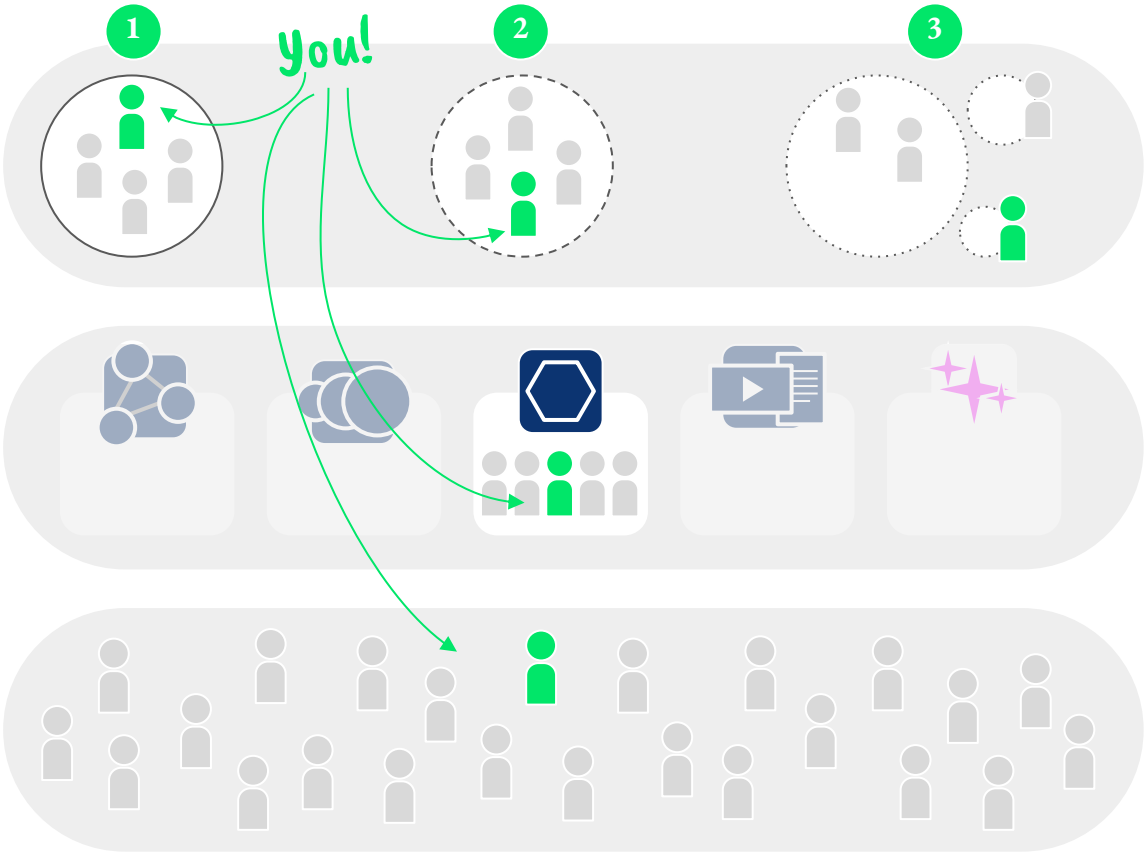
Collaborate with your local cohort to design and deliver three community action Projects during your Fellowship.

Committee work (optional!)

Contribute to your chosen small working group(s) to think about, and coordinate, specific aspects of the All-Fellows Network.

All-Fellows Network

Join up with all Fellows, from every organization, for socials, training, skill sharing and collaborative Lab design.



The Partner roles

Design Thinking

Working ON the Lab to improve the structures we have in place that facilitate youth leadership and youth-led design.

For example:

- Mapping our collective expertise and resources
- Sharing experiences in All-Partner monthly check-ins
- Reflecting on what is working and not working
- Generating solutions to design challenges, so we're always improving

Practical Support

Working IN the Lab to support and unblock Youth as they design and deliver action Projects in their communities.

For example:

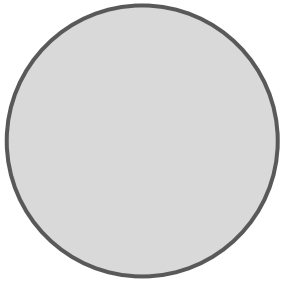
- Admin! Photocopying, release forms, meeting minutes…
- Using institutional experience to remove friction and help Youth achieve their goals
- Connecting Youth with relevant tools, materials or people

Collaborate to design and deliver three Projects during the Fellowship

1

Youth Climate Summit

A proven format - this great toolkit provides the structure and various tried and tested templates, plus room to add your own flourishes

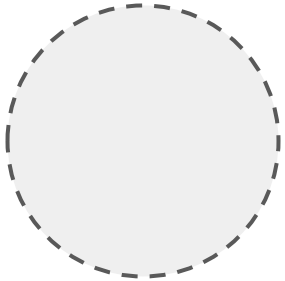


[cohort choice]
(Most YCS events in November)

2

Games Night

An emerging format - some guidelines and suggestions to explore, but lots of room to take it in new directions

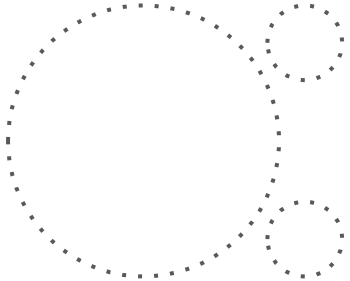


On the same date!
Synchronised across the Network

3

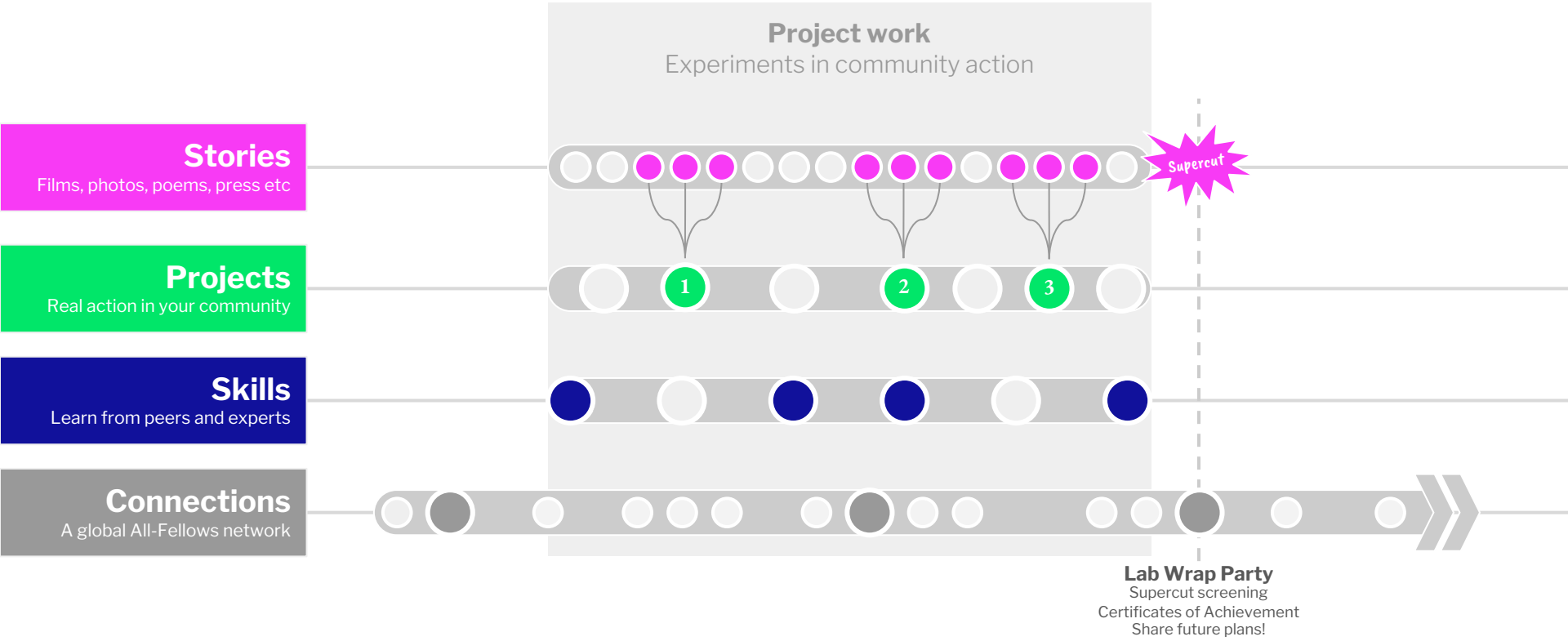
Experimental Project(s)

New format(s) - start fresh or refine something familiar. Work on your own, as a local cohort or coordinate something BIG with the All-Fellows Network!



[cohort choice]
February / March / April

Streams of work for a Critical Action Lab Fellow



Co-design lessons so far!

Clarity on roles and goals

Defining areas of responsibility, points of intersection and outcomes

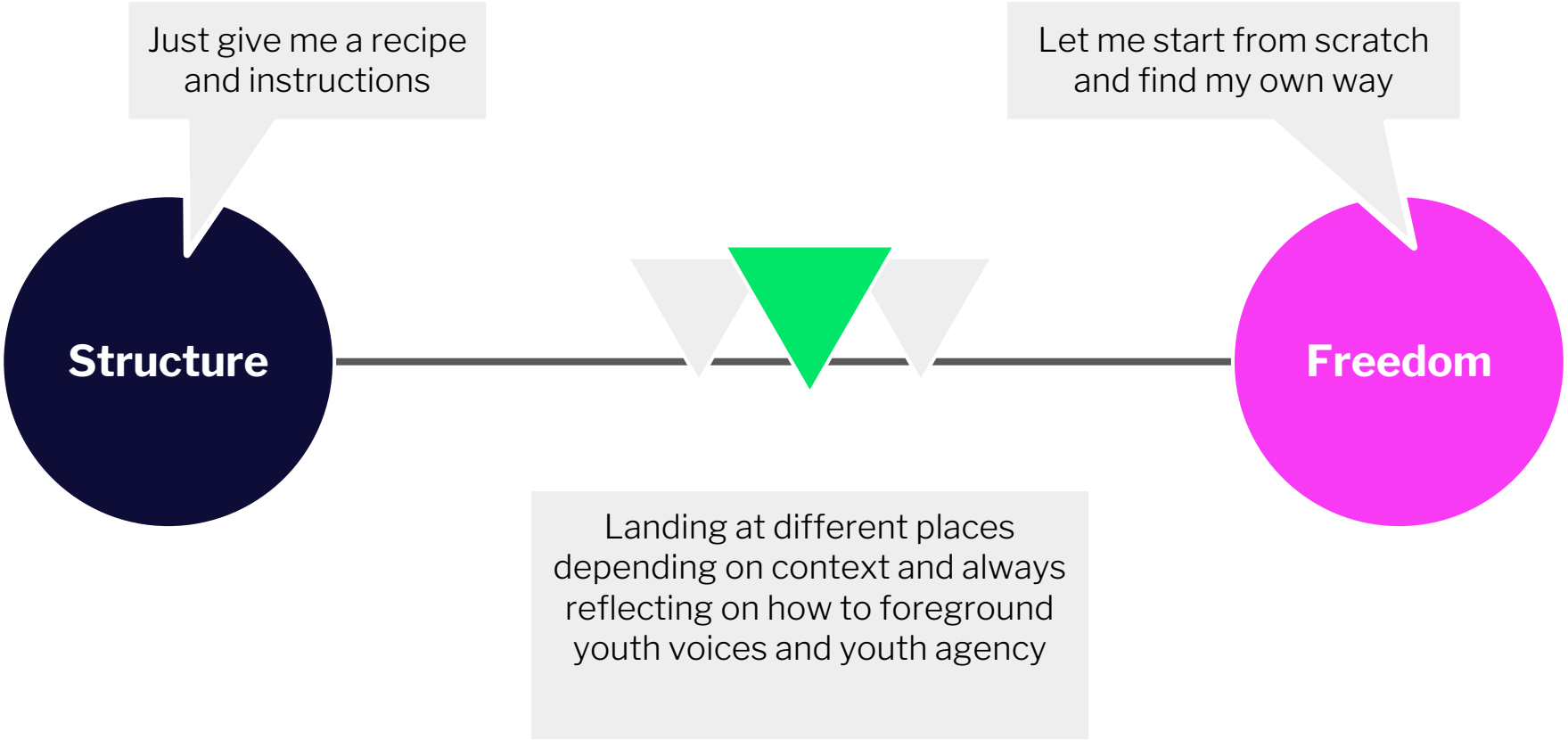
“Whose voice?”

Always checking whether youth or adult voices are loudest

Balancing structure & freedom

The ongoing tension point!

Balancing structure and freedom



Thank you!

CRITICAL ACTION LAB