

# VALUES & BELIEFS

Our values are meant to help The Tech We Want’s program participants build tech community power and the capacity to shift and upend the status quo. They are meant to anchor us as we attempt to meaningfully create an ecosystem that fosters responsible, equitable, and inclusive innovation.

The first draft was written by Aniyia Williams and Karla Monterroso, based on our many conversations and interactions among the group. We also took inspiration from “We Will Not Cancel Us” (Adrienne Maree Brown) and “Crucial Accountability.”

This draft (v2) was revised by the Community & Culture working group (Aden Van Noppen, Coraline Ada Ehmke, Emily Best, Ellen Pao, Ifeoma Ozoma, Jocelyn Macdougall, Julia Solano, Karla Monterroso, Maxine Yeo, Vanessa Mason) between February and April, 2023.

## VALUES



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# Orientation Toward Collective Good

We believe that doing the right thing for as many people as possible will be how the business world weaves together topics such as diversity, equity, belonging and sustainability. We do this by inverting the curve, and ensuring the people on the margins become the highest value. We are not only oriented toward meeting the most needs for the most people, as that approach often optimizes for members of the dominant culture. Rather, we believe that designing for the margins will ultimately benefit the most people in the long run.

An orientation toward collective good elevates collective wellbeing, and we believe, as a happy byproduct, has the effect of making companies who centre this value more appealing to consumers and the most talented workers. A bright future requires a livable planet and more people sharing in the creation of wealth.

We understand that people need to first have their basic needs met before they can help others in a meaningful way, and we expect this project to develop a frame to consider what is “enough” at the individual level. That said, we understand that building for collective wellbeing will always entail some level of selfless investment, which can often be experienced as uncomfortable. Our commitment to inverting the curve and designing for the margins means that we aim to ensure those on the margins experience the lowest levels of discomfort, understanding that discomfort, hurt and even harm are inevitable in this work. While we work to mitigate especially hurt and harm, we build human-centred processes that can guide our pathways toward redress, reconciliation and healing when inevitable instances of hurt and harm occur. This leads to a level of interdependence and interconnectedness which becomes a source of strength and resilience.

We understand that answers to moral questions can be subjective and personal, so we commit to finding common ground anchored around securing the safety and power of those most negatively affected.

## IT IS:

- Interdependence
- Helpfulness
- Shared Prosperity / Ownership
- Democratic
- Using Diversity as our Strength
- Designing for the Margins
- Love

## IT IS NOT:

- Co-dependence
- Entitlement
- Hoarding Resources
- Authoritative
- Diversity Requiring Deference

#### WHEN WE ARE ALIGNED WITH THIS VALUE:

- We are making decisions with an intention to minimize harm and maximize shared prosperity.
- We orient ourselves toward positive give-and-take relationships that produce win-win results whenever possible.
- We make decisions where trade-offs prioritize long-term collective power and well-being for everyone.
- We find ways to compromise when interests diverge.
- We work in solidarity with other groups outside of our own to eliminate all forms of oppression.

#### WHEN WE ARE OUT OF ALIGNMENT WITH THIS VALUE:

- People in our community/network are being taken advantage of/exploited without any plans or intentions of correcting the situation.
- We make tradeoffs that prioritize one's own social or financial capital or comfort over the stability and needs of the community.
- We are more attached to the identity of "good" than the production of good outcomes.
- We are not paying attention to patterns that generate or amplify harm within our network.
- We work in solidarity with other groups outside of our own to eliminate all forms of oppression.

#### THE TRADE-OFFS AND SHADOW-SIDE OF THIS VALUE ARE:

- We will often feel pain as a result of giving up short-term relief or decelerated personal prosperity in the early stages of the project.
- It takes significant time investment to build the required level of trust, which can cause moments of frustration and dissatisfaction.
- Cooperation requires us to compromise and sacrifice, which means we cannot expect utopian results, but we can still share a beautiful future that appreciates the bitter along with the sweet.
- We work in solidarity with other groups outside of our own to eliminate all forms of oppression.



# Orientation Toward Building Alternatives

We are committed to creating the underlying foundation—tools, systems, and resources—needed for responsible innovators to be successful. We shape culture and seed narratives intended to produce tech companies, leaders, and solutions dedicated to collective well-being. We are creating a home for efforts that have been heavily fragmented, connecting folks, building trust and power among an inclusive network of people who align with our values.

An orientation toward collective good elevates collective wellbeing, and we believe, as a happy byproduct, has the effect of making companies who center this value more appealing to consumers and the most talented workers. A bright future requires a livable planet and more people sharing in the creation of wealth.

The work of preventing harm perpetrated by our adversaries is important, but this project is focused on building alternatives for people to embrace. We are problem solvers. Our work is characterized by building tech infrastructure that governments and neoliberal capitalism can't or won't touch due to a lack of understanding or incentives.

We are making a virtual environment that has the potential to help us organize our physical one. We aim to co-create and steward solutions that support our online and physical communities by removing obstacles, sharing collective wisdom, and streamlining what works for us.

## IT IS:

- Responsible Innovation
- Life Affirming
- Taking the Long View
- Problem Solving
- Creating Value & Opportunity
- Adaptability
- Resilience
- Healthy Striving
- Boldness
- Joyful

## IT IS NOT:

- Solutionism
- Quick to Toss Away
- Ignoring the Present
- Structure & Process Overload
- Hoarding Value & Opportunity
- Rigidity or Complacency
- Numbness or Guardedness
- Perfectionism
- Recklessness

#### **WHEN WE ARE ALIGNED WITH THIS VALUE:**

- Each person understands their role in the big picture, and they are playing that role (no matter how big or small).
- Innovation through adaptation is equally valued as innovation through invention. We exercise good judgment when solutions are best realized through re-purposing what already exists versus when we must create something new.
- We pursue opportunities anchored in our purpose, and we fix what we reasonably can along the way.
- We exercise good judgment around which problems we can effectively solve, when we can address them, and who is best equipped to lead and support the effort.
- We set standards that are high but within reach; our goals are ambitious but realistic.
- We deliver on doing what we say, consistently.
- We are committed to a lifelong journey of learning and personal improvement.
- We bounce back quickly from failure or disappointment; we see mistakes as opportunities for growth.
- We explore and respect that there are many paths, and many truths.
- We acknowledge when we don't know; we recognize when we are stepping into work that we're poorly equipped to do or not ready for. In such scenarios, we seek partnership or support to assist us. We understand that sometimes we need to be in a supporting role.

#### **WHEN WE ARE OUT OF ALIGNMENT WITH THIS VALUE:**

- We have spread ourselves too thin, trying to tackle more problems than we have the capacity to effectively address.
- We are too often guided by urgency rather than intention.
- We allow anxiety or fear of failure to prevent us from making progress.
- We act as though there is only one correct way to do things.

#### **THE TRADE-OFFS AND SHADOW-SIDE OF THIS VALUE ARE:**

- We will sometimes forgo solving direct or urgent problems in order to focus on addressing them at the systems-level.
- Our solutions and ways of acting/knowing/being will require time and education for each new person we bring into our network.
- Creating new things requires time and resources to maintain and support them throughout their lifetime. We must also learn to discern when it's time to sunset something.



# Responsible Stewardship of Power

Power is shifting from entrenched positions at the top of hierarchies and moving into distributed networks. Many people who have previously experienced powerlessness are suddenly inheriting positions of authority and privilege, and they need to develop an understanding of and healthy relationship with their newly-inherited influence.

We understand power as a dynamic force. Who holds power and how much they hold changes depending on the context, and one must wield it with care. In this network, we expect power to be shared where there is trust—we can take turns forming visions, representing interests, and making decisions. Positioning power with those best-suited for the moment and situation is key; inclusive power structures are essential. Done well, we believe that small groups connected by a common interest have the ability to create vast network effects.

We understand that you don't only build power by taking but also by giving. It is a more sustainable, more resilient form of power that grows from trust, goodwill, and the natural human desire to reciprocate. This similarly demands attention and commitment to one's ability to affect the opportunities and safety of those likely to be impacted by their choices.

## IT IS:

- Distributed Power
- Accountability
- Transparency
- Being Adaptable
- Compassion
- Inclusivity & Acceptance
- Self-Awareness
- Sustainability
- Motivated
- Reciprocity

## IT IS NOT:

- Working Without Structure
- Punishment & Vengeance
- Sharing Sensitive Info Without Consent
- Operating Without Boundaries
- Pity or Saviorism
- Tolerance Only
- Piety or Smugness
- Risk Aversion
- Toxic Hustle Culture
- Defensive

#### WHEN WE ARE ALIGNED WITH THIS VALUE:

- There is active participation and shared power across our multicultural group, with an emphasis on centring marginalized perspectives.
- We double down on curiosity with those who are most vulnerable to better understand the full impact of our decisions.
- We pay attention to patterns that echo and generate harm, interrupting them, and changing their course.
- We “break the 4th wall” when we sense protocol or propriety is getting in the way of shared understanding.
- We practice taking care of others—when we’re safe we are warm, compassionate, and give grace; we try to apply the most generous interpretation to someone’s actions or intentions.
- We are honest about our personal limits and create mutualistic relationships with other people whose gifts can complement our own.
- We fix mistakes once we recognize them without over-correcting in ways that risk marginalizing members of our community.
- We mitigate uncertainty by gathering additional insights from those who will be most affected by the decision(s) at hand.
- We pay attention to subtle, nonverbal clues that may add important nuance to our understanding of a situation.

#### WHEN WE ARE OUT OF ALIGNMENT WITH THIS VALUE:

- We prioritize scale, growth, profits at the expense of people, purpose and alignment; exploiting people and causes we care about—even unintentionally—to serve our own goals.
- We intimidate or exclude members of our community through the use of jargon or expertise.
- We weaponize allyship or identity to avoid being accountable for the impact of our actions.

#### THE TRADE-OFFS AND SHADOW-SIDE OF THIS VALUE ARE:

- The speed and complexity of managing shared power structures will deter some people from fully participating.
- Institutions have to grapple with risk and unknowns in new ways as they begin to share power with a broader swath of people.
- People may mistake our kindness and generosity for weakness.
- Our work will inevitably attract people with unresolved trauma that runs deeper than our spaces are equipped to support (the broken), people with fleeting commitment to the work (the bored), and people who seek nothing more than personal gain (the grifters).



# A Strategic Relationship with Friction

In our commitment to an equitable and inclusive society, this multicultural network of people working in and around the innovation economy will have to contend with conflict, slowdowns, animosity caused by a clash of interests or beliefs, varied temperaments, varied opinions, and more.

Modern life is defined by its constant contradictions, and we understand that fairness and safety do not happen without intentional decision-making and active engagement with trade-offs. Inclusivity, cooperation, and democratic ways of operating come with friction.

It is important to distinguish between friction and abuse. Vindictiveness, pettiness, direct racism, and the use of threat as a management or coordination tactic is not conflict—it is abuse.

We create space for frustration, anger, disappointment, and sadness, but we will not build our movement on those things. We believe that friction should be the jumping-off point for curiosity and learning. Our work will be defined by productive negotiations between individuals, institutions, and different ways of knowing that have historically struggled to find alignment. As such, it's critical that we not shy away from friction or the discovery of deeper truths.

Many spaces will avoid conflict in order to keep the coalition together. This is not the ethos of this group. We do not instigate, but believe that conflict will allow us to shape the boundaries of our work together. For some, it will indicate that this project is not for them. For others, it will be a siren call for the work. Avoidance does not create justice.

We move at the speed of trust, knowing that a critical mass of people must discuss, define, and agree to a new series of social contracts in good faith that will eventually become codified ways of being, thinking, and acting.



#### IT IS:

- Working Across Difference
- Recognizing Trade-offs
- Healthy Relationship with Conflict
- Creating Safety
- Authenticity
- Honest
- Love & Connection
- Curiosity
- Returning Again and Again

#### IT IS NOT:

- Milquetoast Centrism
- Slowness Defined by Indecision
- Identity-Based Deference
- Creating a Bubble
- Performance of Being “Down”
- “Truth-telling” in bad faith
- Poor Boundaries
- Insensitive Probing
- Niceness
- Etiquette

#### WHEN WE ARE ALIGNED WITH THIS VALUE:

- We can sit in the discomfort of not knowing everything; we find ways to move forward when faced with uncertainty.
- We use diversity as our competitive edge; we are able to see differences as a strength when our community shows up with care and consideration for each other.
- We see problems as opportunities to revisit what is working or not working in a system, and then figure out how to meet the needs of the members of our community.
- We consistently engage with a spirit of curiosity; we move to resolve conflict with love and compassion.
- We are open to feedback and critique from trusted peers; we work to do better once we know better.
- We can name tensions and we regularly come up with practices to manage them. We also understand that some tensions are healthy and will continue to exist.
- We trust our people and then verify when necessary.

#### WHEN WE ARE OUT OF ALIGNMENT WITH THIS VALUE:

- We withhold critical feedback due to the belief that we shouldn't "have to" engage; or due to fear of social repercussions.
- We are not making space for people to learn and grow.
- We see a considerable lag between when problems are identified and when they are resolved.
- We shut down, opt out, or exit at the first sign of friction.
- We deflect from important issues by focusing on expectations of civility. If you're too concerned with the delivery, then you might be missing the message.
- We jump to conclusions and discard people or ideas before doing due diligence.
- We make things overly-complex or fall into either/or thinking in order to avoid discomfort or manage low-trust.
- We are distancing ourselves too far away from the problems that we aim to help solve.
- We dominate instead of explore (instead investigating conflict, we use it as a litmus test or indicator of commitment).

#### THE TRADE-OFFS AND SHADOW-SIDE OF THIS VALUE ARE:

- This value requires a robust personal emotional practice and self-awareness. We must be able to discern between witnessing pain and experiencing it. We must have a personal ritual for managing our own emotional well-being. We must understand ourselves enough to know when we are stepping into work that we may be too tender to take on or too traumatized to not disassociate from.
- This value requires emotional and moral discipline in an era when low emotional and moral discipline is being rewarded with audience, attention, money, and influence.
- People with an aversion to conflict will struggle to live into this value.
- This requires a constant examination of things that could otherwise be ignored; it creates extra work for folks.