

BECOMING A CARING COMMUNITY

a guide for your journey

FROM EXPLORATIONS TO A CARING COMMUNITY

The Caring Community Journey is a multi-year partnership designed to support communities in building caring leadership, shared responsibility, and lasting impact. Through a structured progression, communities move from exploration and readiness into design and integration, and finally community sustainment.

This journey is grounded in listening, relationship building, and shared ownership. While expectations and responsibilities evolve over time, partners are supported throughout with coaching, resources, and collaborative learning.

THE CARING COMMUNITY JOURNEY AT A GLANCE

Exploration & Application	Before entering Year One, communities participate in a required Exploration & Application phase. This phase ensures that the Caring Community model is the right fit and that expectations, roles, and commitments are clearly understood by all parties.			
Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4+	
Year One is intentionally designed as a time to build excitement, shared ownership, and strong community infrastructure. Rather than rushing into outcomes, this year focuses on listening, relationship building, governance, and capacity development. Throughout Year One, communities are supported by Chapman Foundation Caring Community team members, who provides guidance, coaching, and resources.	Year Two builds on the foundation established in Year One by expanding community engagement, deepening action, and developing local leadership. Communities move from primarily listening to increased activation through Listens and Serves programming, while continuing to strengthen internal capacity. Chapman Foundation support continues, with increased local ownership and leadership.	Year Three marks the transition to fully community led implementation. Communities assume full ownership of Listens programming while continuing to develop local facilitators and shared investment models for Serves delivery. The Chapman Foundation remains an engaged team member, providing coaching and supporting quality and sustainability as needed.	After completion of the planned three year journey, communities continue engaging through ongoing partnership opportunities that support long term impact and shared learning.	

EXPLORATION & APPLICATION

EXPLORING READINESS AND ALIGNMENT

Before entering Year One, communities participate in a required Exploration & Application phase. This phase ensures that the Caring Community model is the right fit and that expectations, roles, and commitments are clearly understood by all parties.

EXPLORING READINESS AND ALIGNMENT

Exploration & Learning

- An initial exploration meeting to learn about the Caring Community approach and the full 3-5 year journey
- Identification of a lead (fiduciary) partner and, if appropriate, a local coordinating team
- A Caring Community presentation for a broader group of stakeholders, as needed
- If community is unfamiliar with the Chapman Foundation, it is recommended to host a pilot Listens class for key community members (note: considered 1 of your Year One classes)

Application Process

- An investment application is shared with the lead partner
- The completed application is reviewed internally using the Caring Community rubric
- If approved, the community moves forward into partnership
- If additional clarity is needed, further conversations are scheduled until readiness and alignment are confirmed

This phase ensures that communities enter Year One with clarity, shared commitment, and confidence.

15 YEARS & 1,000 LISTENS CLASSES

POSITIVE CHANGES

Were noted at work when teams of coworkers were trained together.

2/3

Reported positive personal changes at work such as greater job satisfaction. The majority said it had improved their work environment.

Alumni gave high positive ratings to the three-day Our Community Listens training they received.

96%

Were glad they took the class.

81% - 91%

Positive ratings for the six training modules.

DISC/Reflective Listening

Were the highest-rated modules.

Alumni are still applying the nine skills and techniques they learned in the three-day class.



Usage ranged from about 90% for Empathy and Reflective Listening to 59% for the Three Moves Model.



The effects of training have not faded with time — those trained more than 5 years ago are still using their skills at the same rate as others.

By using their communication and listening skills, the vast majority of alumni have experienced positive life changes.

YOUR TEAM FOR THE JOURNEY

A Caring Community succeeds when structure supports relationships, leadership is shared, and communities learn their way forward together. This journey is accomplished by four interconnected partners and together, these roles ensure the work is relational, accountable, and sustainable.

Chapman Foundation Team Member(s)	Lead (Fiduciary) Partner	Governance/Local Coordinating Team	Broader Community Partners
Provides direction, financial support, and guidance	Provides structure, oversight, and continuity	Sets direction and stewards relationships	Co-create, participate, and share responsibility

GOVERNANCE & THE LOCAL COORDINATING TEAM

Governance is adaptive, not fixed. It grows with the community. The Local Coordinating Team serves as the heart of the Caring Community.

Primary Responsibilities

- Hold the shared vision and values of the Caring Community
- Guide priorities based on listening, learning, and reflection
- Steward relationships across sectors and perspectives
- Support facilitator development and leadership emergence
- Reflect on learning and adapt direction over time

What Governance Looks Like in Practice

- Cross-sector representation (nonprofit, business, faith, education, civic, residents)
- Shared leadership with rotating roles when possible
- Clear but flexible decision-making processes
- A commitment to learning over perfection

THE LEAD (FIDUCIARY) PARTNER

The Lead (Fiduciary) Partner provides the structural backbone of the Caring Community. The fiduciary role enables shared ownership by providing clarity and support.

Core Responsibilities

- Serve as the formal partner of record
- Hold and steward financial resources
- Enter into and uphold partnership agreements
- Coordinate or delegate logistics (venues, scheduling, materials)
- Ensure continuity through leadership transitions

What the Fiduciary Partner Is (and Is Not)

- A convener, steward, and stabilizing anchor
- Responsible for oversight and accountability
- Not the sole decision-maker
- Not expected to implement the work alone

DECISION-MAKING & SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Caring Communities are built on shared ownership, not control and no singular organization carries the community alone. Differences of perspective are expected and addressed through dialogue, reflection, and facilitated support. This shared approach creates durability, trust, and long-term impact.

How Decisions Are Typically Made

- Direction is shaped by listening and community insight
- The Coordinating Team guides strategy and priorities
- The Fiduciary Partner ensures legal and financial responsibility
- The Chapman Foundation provides coaching and guardrails

How the Work Is Shared (Not Singular)

- Leadership is distributed
- Relationships do the heavy lifting
- Capacity is built over time
- Responsibility shifts gradually from Foundation-supported to community-led

YEAR ONE: BUILDING THE FOUNDATION TOGETHER

WHAT YEAR ONE IS ALL ABOUT

Year One is intentionally designed as a time to build excitement, shared ownership, and strong community infrastructure. Rather than rushing into outcomes, this year focuses on listening, relationship building, governance, and capacity development.

Throughout Year One, communities are supported by a Chapman Foundation Caring Community team member, who provides guidance, coaching, and resources.

By the end of Year One, communities should expect to have or be working towards:

- A shared mission grounded in local voices
- Engaged leaders and a local coordinating team
- A clear and sustainable governance structure
- Trained facilitators
- Readiness to deepen impact in Year Two

WHAT HAPPENS DURING YEAR 1

1. Partnership Agreement

- Participate in a partnership meeting to review roles, responsibilities, and expectations
- Receive a community agreement for review by the fiduciary partner
- Finalize and return a signed agreement

2. Activation Through Listens

- Host initial Our Community Listens classes with key leaders, changemakers, and stakeholders (this may have happened in the Exploration & Application Phase)
- Use these sessions to build awareness, engagement, and momentum
- Enroll two or three (2-3) team members in Our Community Listens Facilitator Training
- Aim for approximately 24 participants per session
- Communities will also complete a baseline Pulse Survey to inform priorities and establish a foundation for future learning and reflection.

3. Governance & Infrastructure

- Identify a local coordinating team
- Adopt committee guidelines and decision making protocols
- Define goals, action steps, and success indicators
- Establish a sustainable model for rotating leadership and membership
- Identify any necessary working groups

4. Designed for Your Community

- Develop a shared mission tailored to local needs and strengths
- Design initiatives or pilot efforts that build caring leadership capacity
- Host a minimum of three (3) Our Community Listens classes (approximately 24 participants each), with flexibility by mutual agreement
- Contribute local resources when reasonably possible (such as venues, food, or local funding)
- Utilize subject matter experts provided by the Foundation

5. Capacity Building & Awareness

- Identify and secure local financial investments to support Year Two
- Promote the Caring Community through storytelling, programming, and events
- Coordinate and host a public launch event
- Provide logistical and administrative support, including participant recruitment
- Participate in monthly coaching calls and annual progress reviews
- Strengthen cross sector collaboration and shared learning

YEAR TWO: EXPANDING IMPACT

WHAT YEAR TWO IS ALL ABOUT

Year Two builds on the foundation established in Year One by expanding community engagement, deepening action, and developing local leadership. Communities move from primarily listening to increased activation through Listens and Serves programming, while continuing to strengthen internal capacity.

Foundation support continues, with increased local ownership and leadership.

By the end of Year Two, communities should expect to have or be working towards:

- Broader participation through expanded Listens and Serves classes
- Increased momentum around community identified priorities
- Emerging local facilitators prepared to lead programming
- Greater organizational and financial stability
- Readiness to scale impact in future years

WHAT HAPPENS DURING YEAR TWO

1. Expanding Listening & Introducing Service

- Add the Our Community Serves class to their teaching repertoire
- Host a minimum of four (4) Listens and/or Serves classes, each serving approximately 24 participants
- Use programming to translate learning into shared action and responsibility

2. Local Ownership of Logistics & Implementation

- Assume full responsibility for logistical resources and associated costs, including venue, food, and materials
- Continue working with Foundation provided facilitators while local facilitator capacity is developed
- Coordinate participant recruitment and on site logistics

3. Facilitator Development

- Receive Foundation funded Facilitator Development Training for up to two participants
- Locally support additional facilitators, as identified

4. Continued Capacity Building & Financial Sustainability

- Build upon governance and leadership structures established in Year One
- Secure local financial investments needed for program continuation
- Integrate learning from Year One into broader community initiatives

5. Awareness, Storytelling, & Engagement

- Promote the Caring Community through approved programming, storytelling, events, and engagement initiatives
- Highlight local voices and emerging impact
- Foster cross sector collaboration and shared learning

6. Ongoing Partnership & Reflection

- Participate in monthly coaching calls
- Engage in annual progress reviews
- Reflect on learning to inform future programming

3

Primary types of life changes — or benefits — were found in the analysis of respondents' open-ended comments.



Listening and Communication

Most commenters felt that having improved communication skills was a significant life change by itself that enabled them to do much more in their lives.



Relationships and Settings

Alumni reported many examples of improved relationships with family, coworkers, friends, and others due to the class; also they noted improved functioning in particular settings.



Personal Change

Alumni cited examples of personal change including being more confident, better leaders, and more self-aware, patient, and positive about life and themselves.

YEAR THREE: COMMUNITY LED IMPLEMENTATION

WHAT YEAR THREE IS ALL ABOUT

Year Three marks the transition to fully community led implementation. Communities assume full ownership of Listens programming while continuing to develop local facilitators and shared investment models for Serves delivery.

The Foundation remains an engaged team member, providing coaching and supporting quality and sustainability as needed.

By the end of Year Three, communities should expect to have or be working towards:

- Full local ownership of Our Community Listens programming
- Strong operational and financial readiness
- Locally developed facilitators prepared for independent delivery
- Clear pathways for sustaining and expanding impact

WHAT HAPPENS DURING YEAR THREE

1. Full Community Ownership of Listens

- Assume full responsibility for providing all resources necessary for Our Community Listens delivery
- Fully fund and manage all aspects of Listens Classes, including venue, staffing, food, materials, and participant recruitment
- Deliver programming using trained local facilitators, with Foundation support as needed

2. Shared Investment in Serves

- Jointly invest with the Foundation in Our Community Serves Classes
- Continue using Foundation facilitators until Partner facilitators are fully trained and credentialed

3. Continued Facilitator Development

- Continue developing and mentoring local facilitators, adding new facilitators as needed
- Prepare for eventual independent delivery of Our Community Serves Classes by sending facilitators through Serves training

Funding Ideas to Create a Financially Successful Caring Community

- Community Sponsors
- Collaborating Partners:
 - Venue
 - Food
 - Class Materials
- External Grants
- Small Registration Fee

At The Chapman Foundation, we never want funding to be an issue. As you are planning your Caring Community, we have resources to help you create a financially sustainable plan.

YEAR FOUR: ONGOING PARTNERSHIP & SUSTAINED IMPACT

GOING FORWARD AS A CARING COMMUNITY

After completion of the planned three year journey, communities continue engaging through ongoing partnership opportunities that support long-term impact and shared learning. As an accomplished Caring Community, you now have the structure in place to create lasting change at home, work, and throughout the community.

CONTINUING GROWTH & OPPORTUNITIES

- Hosting Our Community Listens and Serves classes using local Caring Community facilitators
- Offering ongoing learning sessions
- Coordinating multiple opportunities each year for Foundation engagement with Caring Community participants
- Participating in annual site visits and six month virtual reporting
- Engaging in partnership impact analysis and reflection
- Opportunities for storytelling, media engagement, and peer mentoring



EMBRACE THE JOURNEY

The Caring Community Journey is not about short term outcomes, it is about creating the conditions for lasting, community led change. By moving thoughtfully from exploration to ownership, communities build the leadership, trust, and capacity needed to care well for one another over time.

The goal of creating these Caring Communities is to foster spaces where trust grows, belonging increases, and communities become more resilient. A Caring Community is built when businesses, schools, nonprofits, and civil leaders commit to shaping environments where everyone feels safe, supported, and empowered to contribute meaningfully.

We understand this can seem daunting and are here to help. Contact the Katie Horning, Director of Emerging Communities at Katie.Horning@ChapmanCommunities.org for more information.