



Illuminating Learning from The Berkana Institute: Developing Publications and Electronic Media

Local action and trans-local learning as a model for change in uncertain times.

There is no universal solution for the challenges of poverty, community health or ecological sustainability. But there is the possibility of widespread impact when people working at the local level are able to learn from one another, practice together and share their learning with communities everywhere. Berkana calls this “trans-local” learning, and we believe that large-scale change emerges when local actions get connected globally while preserving their deeply local culture, flavor and form.

In many ways, our work is quite simple. We *name* communities of pioneering leaders who belong together, *connect* them to one another, *nourish* them with wisdom and resources, and *illuminate* their stories to the world so many more can join in.

What Illuminating Is—and Why It Matters

It is difficult for any of us to see a new paradigm, even when it’s right under our noses. If people even notice pioneering efforts, they are most likely to see these as inspiring and temporary deviations from the norm. It takes time, attention and a consistent focus for people to see them for what they are: examples of what’s possible, of what our new world could look like. By shining a light on the efforts of pioneering leaders, Berkana is working to develop a high level of public awareness, to attract attention and resources to their efforts, and to encourage others to step forward on behalf of the issues that most concern them.

Pioneers from Guatemala and Mexico are creating bicycle-powered washing machines, water pumps and corn grinders—and sharing that innovation with partners in Iran and India. Leaders in downtown Johannesburg and Montreal are exchanging ideas about growing food on rooftops and window sills—developing the capacity to feed their communities despite limited growing space. Creative “upcyclers” in India are using waste materials like tires and car windshields to create functioning solar cookers.

The Berkana community publishes articles, tells these empowering stories at conferences, and hosts learning journeys where people visit pioneering efforts, learn from them directly and develop lasting relationships. Sharing these stories with a broader community invites others to contribute their wisdom and makes certain that these efforts are not in isolation.

An essential part of Berkana's mission is to make our learning visible so that others can apply new ideas in their own organizations and communities. We recognize the widespread impact publications can have in opening doors and launching new dialogues. For example, our most recent publication, "Lifecycle of Emergence: Using Emergence to Take Social Innovation to Scale" co-authored by Margaret Wheatley and Deborah Frieze, has been republished on multiple web sites and used as the foundation for keynote speaking engagements.

Healthy and resilient communities are being created around the world because ordinary people see the difference they can make and step forward. The clarity and courage they carry is contagious: Others see what is possible and begin to consider how they, too, can make a difference. It is the combination of these many separate actions—rather than someone's master plan—that creates resilient communities. Berkana seeks support to illuminate these important stories.

What follows is a list of proposed publications and electronic media projects for which we are seeking funding support.

Publications

1. Booklet: South Asia Fellows

Description: This booklet highlights the learning from a youth fellowship program launched in 2005 by India-based Abhiviyakti and Shikshantar learning centers, in partnership with The Berkana Institute. This fellowship invited youth from disadvantaged communities to embark on a yearlong, self-directed learning process in their community. Participants chose practice areas (such as herbal medicine, community media, making products from waste, organic farming and more), developed their skills and explored how to create viable livelihoods that would benefit their communities.

The success of this program has given us much to share about how to create the conditions for self-directed learning. This booklet, which tells the stories of three fellows and the patterns between them, will offer that learning beyond the fellowship community.

Learning value will be created for:

- Berkana Exchange community: Other learning centers in the Exchange have expressed a desire to launch similar fellowship programs. This booklet will serve as a starting point.
- Fellowship programs: This booklet will detail the design criteria and results for an alternative youth fellowship program that may serve others running fellowship programs.
- International development organizations: Other organizations working internationally may benefit from learning about a program that relies on local leadership and resources to generate a self-sustaining program.

- Alternative schools and universities: Groups that are creating and adapting alternative learning models and programs will find value in the reflections on the challenges and successes of this fellowship program.

Cost: We are seeking an additional \$5000 to complete the writing, printing and distribution of this booklet.

2. Booklet: Art of Learning Centering

Description: The Art of Learning Centering is the annual gathering of the Berkana Exchange. It is an opportunity for our community to learn about one another's local work, to share experiences and skills, and to engage in the challenge of learning from one another's cultural diversity. After spending 10 days together, participants return to their communities feeling inspired and rejuvenated, carrying with them new practices from around the world.

The Berkana Institute has hosted four gatherings: in Zimbabwe (2008), Greece (2007), Mexico (2006) and Canada (2005). We have gained some wisdom around what it takes to host an international gathering that leads to transformative action. We have learned how to invite people into designing their own next steps and how to bridge cultural divides. We believe this knowledge will be immensely valuable to community organizers who are working to catalyze change in large social networks.

Learning value will be created for:

- Berkana Exchange community: Exchange participants are stepping forward to self-organize the next Art of Learning Centering gathering. This booklet will be an invaluable reference for them in planning, designing and obtaining resources for the event.
- Facilitators: Individuals, communities and organizations that are hosting events to engage groups in social change can learn about how we created conditions for transformative action.
- Intercultural groups: Individuals and facilitators who are hosting intercultural dialogues will use this resource as a guide to plan engaging conversations, identify potential challenges and support intercultural participation.
- Ecovillages and communities of place: Groups that share a commitment to a place (village, town) can learn how to invite participation both through conversation and practical skills, but also by sharing spiritual and cultural practices.

Cost: We are seeking \$12,000 for writing, development, production, printing and distribution of this publication.

3. Article: Creating the Conditions for Working Intentionally Emergence

Description: *Start anywhere, follow it everywhere. The leaders we need are already here. We have what we need.* These are some of the conditions that need to be present to create the world we wish for.

In 2007, Berkana published “Lifecycle of Emergence: Taking Social Innovation to Scale”, a description of what becomes possible when we work intentionally with emergence. We are proposing part two of this article, which will explore the core beliefs we hold when we harness the natural power of emergence. We will highlight stories from members of the Berkana community who are living the future now by practicing these principles in their homes, their neighborhoods and the world.

Learning value will be created for:

- Berkana’s core audience: Berkana’s co-founder, Margaret Wheatley, has developed a substantial readership base since her first book, *Leadership and the New Science*, was published in 1992. People turn to Berkana to continue learning about systems theory and working intentionally with emergence.
- Learning institutes and organizational development groups: Many schools and universities have been using *Leadership and the New Science* as a textbook over the years. This article could be used as supplemental reading for those students and others working in the organizational development field.
- Foundations and social change organizations: Network theory is playing an increasingly significant role in how social change organizations approach their work. This article provides insight into what it looks like when this leading edge thinking is applied in the field.

Cost: We are seeking \$12,000 for writing, development, production, printing and distribution of this publication.

Electronic Media

4. WiserEarth

Description: Learning in community and sharing new knowledge with others releases an enormous power for positive change in the world. Community is where we derive the support that enables us to act with greater resolve and courage, where our collective learning occurs exponentially, and where our connections foster emergence of a powerful force for change.

Berkana has chosen WiserEarth as our new online learning platform. WiserEarth represents values that are deeply aligned with ours, and it hosts an international community of individuals and organizations who are working to solve today’s most pressing social issues. An open source platform, WiserEarth offers the social processes and tools required to

create and share knowledge, enabling reflective communities to convene conversations, co-create and publish documents, invite others into their learning experiences, and exchange valuable ideas and resources.

Learning value will be created for:

- Berkana Exchange community: In WiserEarth, Exchange members can learn together at a distance by exchanging knowledge about sustainable innovations, funding opportunities, engaging articles and publications, photos, short films and more. They can continue conversations begun in person around their challenges, questions and opportunities—and invite in many more voices.
- WiserEarth broader community: WiserEarth is already home to a web of social entrepreneurs, foundations, non-profit organizations, communities, and other groups committed to creating social change. It is a high traffic space where many others will come in contact with Berkana’s work and community.
- Social entrepreneurs, pioneering leaders: There are many leaders in community who feel as though they are alone in their work. WiserEarth is a place where they can connect with others facing similar challenges.

Cost: We are seeking \$11,000 to support 12 months of stewarding the WiserEarth space, which includes staff time managing memberships, developing content and hosting community.

5. Enewsletter

Description: We distribute a quarterly electronic newsletter that shares stories from the Berkana Exchange, offers articles that invite new thinking, and highlights opportunities to participate in learning events. Keeping connected and current with our constituency is a vital part of Berkana’s work.

Learning value will be created for: Berkana’s constituency of activists, social change practitioners, foundations, facilitators, consultants, thought leaders and many others who wish to stay up to date with what we’re working on, learning and making visible.

Cost: We are seeking \$5,000 to support publishing a quarterly enewsletter, which includes staff time managing membership and developing content.

6. Berkana Web Site

Description: Our web site is a gateway to Berkana’s work. It is a space for people to read about what we do, learn about our values and mission, and understand our theory of change. It is also a place for people to find out more about upcoming events, learn about our consulting services and get connected to our partners.

Learning value will be created for: More than 5,000 unique visitors come to the Berkana web site each month. We know that people from many different places and backgrounds turn to Berkana to learn about leading edge efforts to create healthy and resilient communities. We provide a gateway to a learning environment where people can find one another and act together in the world.

Cost: We are seeking \$5,000 to support managing www.berkana.org.

Total Budget

Publications

South Asia Fellows Booklet	5,000
AoLC: Learning from Gatherings	12,000
Conditions article	12,000
Total for Publications	29,000

Electronic Media

WiserEarth stewardship	11,000
Website	5,000
eNewsletter	5,000
Total for Electronic Media	21,000

Total for Publications	29,000
Total for Electronic Media	21,000
Illumination stewardship	10,000
Total Funding Requirements	60,000

Invitation

Illuminating our learning is an opportunity to create widespread impact by sharing knowledge, practices and new ideas among people everywhere who are working at the local level to create healthy and resilient communities. We invite you to bring in your expertise, good wishes, finances and voice to help us create the world we wish for.

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