

# PLEXUS INSTITUTE 2.0

Plexus Institute was founded as a network for learning and engagement focused on practical implications and applications of complexity theory in real-life events. Through open conferences, research collaborations, projects and a diverse and active community, Plexus encouraged adopting a complexity lens for addressing organizational and institutional opportunities and challenges.

Change is guaranteed and we are setting the conditions for the future with Plexus 2.0, a self-organizing network to connect, engage, practice and support people shaping learning and projects rooted in complexity theory.

## **What is Plexus 2.0?**

Plexus remains committed to *Addressing real-world challenges through the understanding, advancement and diffusion of ideas and practices rooted in the principles of complexity.*

Our guiding principles have not changed but the focus of activities and work is changing. We will rely on the energy, effort and support of the network to identify, collaborate and initiate activities for addressing real-world challenges using complexity practices and theory. A minimal network structure (staff, website and platforms) will provide sufficient operational support for self-organized projects, learning and training opportunities and collaborative partnerships to emerge.

## **How will this happen?**

A committed group of Catalysts (volunteers) have contributed strategic insight, countless hours of work and a belief in the value of an open professional network and engagements for sharing, learning and practicing complexity. After assessing the rich legacy of Plexus Institute, the first action was to set the conditions for an experiment in self-organizing around proposed network deliverables and short term possibilities. The process was messy and demanding and wildly successful.

What we share below is the outcomes of our work, a foundation for how Plexus 2.0 will continue to be a thought and action leader in using the principles of complexity to address and engage in difficult change.

Plexus 2.0 launches with a new website ([www.plexusinstitute.org](http://www.plexusinstitute.org)), a streamlined operation, an easy to access repository of content and applications on topics of complexity, and a new book on Adaptive Positive Deviance (coming in October 2017).

We have three commitments for network work:

**An Open Network** for knowledge sharing, learning and collaborating

**A Curated Repository** of digital content and models addressing complexity theory and practice

**Connection to Network Projects, People and Ideas** that engage, practice and support applications rooted in complexity

## **Plexus 2.0 Network Structure**

Plexus 2.0 is a departure from previous membership and professional association models. The new operating model is designed around five interconnected components that draw upon the adaptive and scalable nature of self-organizing network structures.

As a 501C3 (which can accept tax deductible donations and grants), there are certain functions that will be the responsibility of the Plexus Institute Board, such as the legal, financial and fiduciary duties (health and strength) of the network. Essential network administrative activities will be supported by a combination of volunteers and project-based paid staff (using social media, communications and data management). As the needs and financial resources of the network change staffing and support functions can be evaluated and adapted.

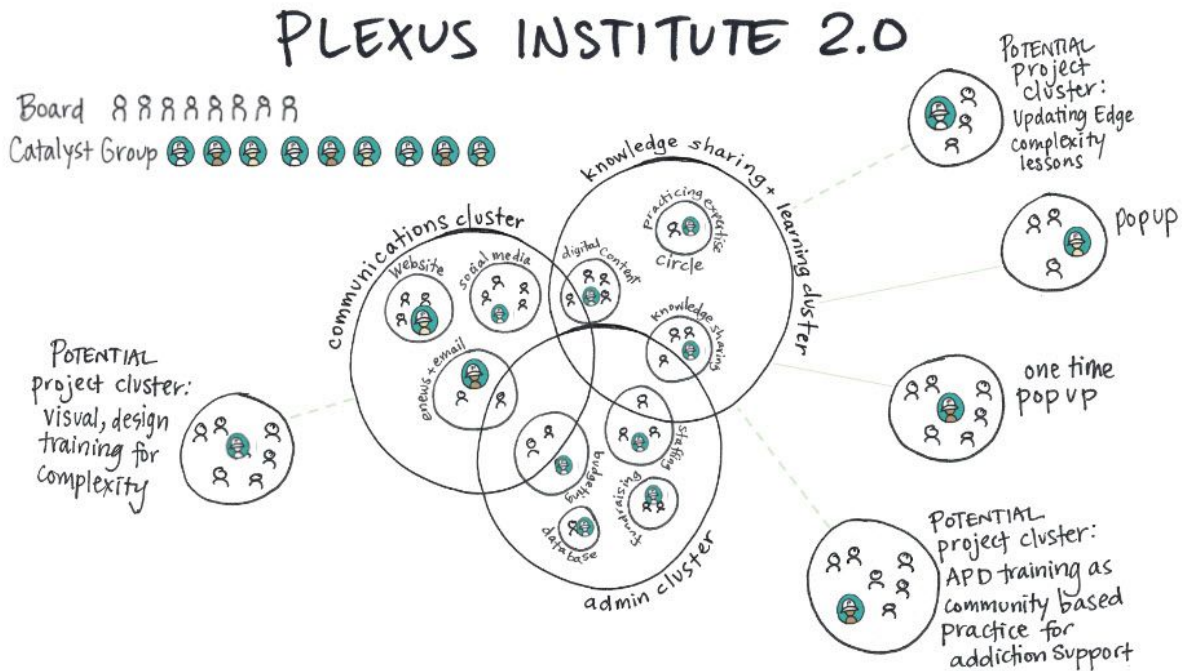
## **So how does a self-organizing network work?**

Creating a self-organizing response to network activities, project opportunities and knowledge exchanges, will involve each of the five key components described below. Catalysts to shape the direction within the network, Clusters to allow for specific focus and work, Circles to address and provide the necessary activities that keep the network going, Projects to connect people for engaging, practicing and working on real-world problems that integrate complexity theory and advance new thinking and applications, and Pop-Ups to allow for a one time session or discussion on a topic or idea.

## **Our Self-Organizing Language**

1. **Clusters** are a term for sets of people interested in a specific activity, issue or topic who self-organize to act or learn
2. **Projects** are initiated by members or partners of the network who form a project cluster for development and implementation of a particular task or service focusing on a real-world problem, which can be better addressed with complexity theory. Past projects have focused on health care, education, and improved operations in organizations.
3. **Catalysts** are self-organizing leaders who initiate, influence and coordinate the key clusters and emerging projects in the network

4. **Circles** are formed to work on specific network operations, activities or projects (circles can form within a cluster and become project cluster themselves)
5. **Pop-Ups** are one-time sessions to learn or discuss a particular topic (can be a formed by a cluster)



**Clusters** form the core of the network activity. Initial Network Clusters will be populated by Catalysts, volunteers and limited paid staff. The main purpose of these clusters is to support network outreach and communications, knowledge sharing and learning opportunities and projects. It is expected that network members will be engaged in all of these activities. The value derived from being an active participant in Plexus 2.0 is proportional to the robust nature of Network clusters.

Each Cluster will have a minimum of one Catalyst who provides guidance and leadership and serves on the Plexus 2.0 Catalyst group.

**Project Clusters** support a wide range of network initiatives and activities that explore and apply complexity approaches to addressing challenges and opportunities in complex systems. This also includes projects that advance complexity knowledge and theory. For example, Plexus has worked on a number of projects that integrate complexity models to address new approaches to healthcare problems. Project Catalysts often bring ideas, specific projects,

partnerships or research that they want to introduce to the Network for feedback, collaboration or sourcing of project members.

Past projects have included projects in healthcare (the adaptive positive deviance model was used to reduce MRSA infection rates), adaptive leadership in organizations (the Starfish model was introduced to the army for leadership development) and education (creating learning opportunities for understanding and using principles of complexity for everyday activities).

**Circles** are opportunities to address specific activities in a Cluster and across the Network. The very nature of these two activities is responsive to the changing needs and work in the Network.

Examples of initial Circles needed within the network clusters are listed below. However, Circles will be adjusted as the clusters form and begin to take action. The scale and scope of Plexus 2.0 is clearly impacted by the energy, effort and resources that can be devoted to these Clusters and Circles.

#### **Communications Cluster Circles**

- Web Page
- eNews and eMail
- Social Media circle

#### **Knowledge Sharing and Learning Cluster Circles**

- Digital content and repository (projects and general complexity information)
- Topical knowledge sharing
- Learning and practicing existing and new network expertise

#### **Admin, Finance and Resources Cluster Circles**

- Budgeting
- Staffing
- Fundraising
- Database

**Pop-Ups** will offer learning opportunities that arise from network activities or projects. Plexus has always offered a steady stream of individual and group learning opportunities. Plexus 2.0 will continue this tradition with an emphasis on responding to network needs. We will look to the network to propose and lead Pop-Up learning events focused on specific projects, specific complexity issues or around topics of interest within the network. The goal is to create numerous opportunities for connections to people, ideas and learning.

The Plexus 2.0 self-organizing network serves as the place to find numerous opportunities to connect and collaborate; to practice applying complexity theory to solving real-world problems; and for engaging with people, ideas and learning.

## **What can you do?**

We have shared the framework for Plexus 2.0 and in addition to sharing your energy and effort we are asking for financial support.

**Volunteer** - The single most important part of Plexus 2.0 network is people - the people who volunteer and share their energy, expertise, and effort. The diversity of Clusters, Circles and Pop-ups, is important to building a robust self-organizing network and will require significantly more Catalysts and volunteers than we have now. We have a hypothesis: there is enough excitement and need for what Plexus 2.0 can offer that people will step up and volunteer. Our best guess of what we need in the next few months is as follows:

- 20 Catalysts who devote at least 3-5 hours a week to the Plexus network
- 2-3 exploratory Project Clusters with a Catalyst lead and group members
- 2 new workshop proposals to be offered through Plexus 2.0
- 2-3 Pop-Up events per month led by volunteers or Catalysts who can organize and deliver the Pop-Up sessions
- 4 blog posts per month authored by network members who share their work, ideas and questions

**Donate to Plexus.** Our fundraising goals for the next 6 months are as follows:

We are looking for 10 people with donations of \$1000+

We are looking for 200 people with donations of \$100-\$1000

We are looking for 100 people with donations of \$10-\$100

You can donate online (<https://plexusinstitute.org/product/donate/> )

## **Schedule of Events**

On October 17th and 20th we are scheduling Pop-Ups to obtain feedback from the all current and potential Plexus network members. We are also actively seeking Catalysts, volunteers and individual donations.

## **Spread the News.**

Join the **#WhyPlexus** outreach. Tell us on social media and in blog posts why you are part of the Plexus network and why you want to be part of Plexus 2.0.

On **Twitter**, follow [@plexusinstitute](#)

On **Facebook**, like and follow the [Plexus page](#)

On **LinkedIn**, join the [Plexus group](#) to connect with peers

On **Youtube**, subscribe to the [Plexus channel](#)

[Contact us](#) (admin@plexusinstitute.org) to volunteer, share feedback and your questions.

**THANKS for being part of the Plexus community! We're glad to have you!**