

Dear Future Director of Learning,

Let me start by stating I am so glad you have arrived. For 23 years we have been facilitating the i.c.stars model to ensure transformation and growth for our community leaders while they learn technology skills and deep processes to be able to apply systems thinking to their leadership paths. We have been waiting for you.

The model

Our model has 3 core modalities across traditional classroom instruction, PBL or competency based learning and transformational learning and our core curriculum spans all three modalities.

An important component of our model is the **just in time learning** delivered by Subject matter experts and volunteers. On average 100 volunteers plug in to each training cohort reversing the paradigm of 1 teacher to many students to 1 student to many teachers.

The learning environment is rich, it is also dynamic and as our learners will say, "its deep". We designed the model for **underserved and underrepresented adults who have demonstrated resilience as a result of overcoming adversity**. It is challenging on a collective learning level and designed to challenge each individual on the journey.

For the most part the learner experiences the training as they did all the learning work starting with understanding multiple intelligences, cross cultural communication and systems of trust leading up to student centered consulting work which spans the next 18 months.

Our students we call interns

We do very little pre teaching as we expect our resilient learners to already have the tools skills and competencies to do knowledge work. **It is up to them to apply their experience to the current client situation**. The facilitated debrief with the program manager is where all of the learnings are unpacked through an unbiased debrief lens.

In essence, we believe that through a lifetime of facing and overcoming adversity our interns have developed a resiliency toolkit which includes, critical thinking skills, reciprocity, innovation, creativity, chutzpa and an ability to solve complex problems. i.c.stars is a place for our folks to unpack that toolkit and apply it to their current client and community work. We provide the context for our learners to unpack their hard earned gifts. It is the differentiator that our interns bring to the table.

For the most part our program teams are trainers. They do not have education degrees nor have they had extensive classroom experience. They have been trainers in technology or a specific vocational skill. This is a challenge as well as a gift. It is challenging because often times our staff will try and "manage" their way through a cycle. They will focus on rules and right vs wrong. They will manage the volunteers and the calendar and may even confuse management for teaching. While the technology trainers have specific competencies to teach in order for the interns to complete the project. This is more elusive with the leadership curriculum.

Though it is well defined and codified over 23 years it remains the most illusive aspect of our curriculum because it lacks an educators understanding of Blooms taxonomy and does not frequently move beyond comprehension for our trainers whereas it was designed to be the entire pyramid of learning steps just getting juicy at application.

The model is dynamic and exciting and I designed it to be an educators playground, where by the model would dynamically flex with the market changes and influences and yet the leadership curriculum would be evergreen and would anchor the changing technology curriculum in the notion that **leadership is making opportunities for others.**

An Educators Playground

Within the program curriculum there are seed starters, nurturing and buds that emerge in 4 months, yet some of the seeds planted wont come up for months or even years. Because we know that **transformation takes time.** The same holds true for our program staff. We know that it takes 3 cycles for a program manager to fully absorb the program model, the first cohort they are learning from you, observing and supporting you leading the curriculum, the scond cycle they are co-teaching and the third you are observing.

We are not like school but we are a school.

The difference about school and work is school is all about you and work is about everybody else. i.c.stars is the bridge between school as we knew it to work as knowledge workers. So even our language reflects that transformation. Our learners are not students they are interns, there are not report cards or grades but performance appraisals and PIPS. The most notable difference is that **i.c.stars is their company.** The staff of i.c.stars are the stewards to make sure the lights stay on both literally and figuratively.

Have I scared you? Does this sound like the role that your experiences as an educator have lead up to? Here are some dichotomies to consider:

Technology AND leadership

Both are enhanced with the other they are not in competition but in collaboration to the transformative model. We raise the bar and demonstrate our own resilience by teaching programming vs. a simpler or easier technology track. Its about shifting from consumers of technology to being a maker, or creator sof technology. In addition the idea of teaching leadership vs. professional behaviors or job readiness with the belief that if we frame the leanring in leadership; how you show up will represent your leadership goal. Its bigger than you.

Community AND industry

We dont stop at one. It is about concatenation, bringing together the best of both to include both communities of leaders. No one is better or more important than the other. This is very difficult to enact because most dollars come from corporate stakeholders. And because of racial inequity and systemic oppression, white business men are percieved as more valuable than anyone else and their needs and norms should come first. To enact a libratory space for becoming is

dependent on facing these uncomfortable truths to get to the systems level of analysis in order to be a change agent in that structure. Which brings us to...

Liberation AND concatenation sitting between them is innovation. It is moving from our binary corners or right and wrong, win and lose, left and right to understanding the space in between where innovation happens, where change happens and where community happens.

Womanist AND capitalist We are a womanist organization. We are in a capitalist, patriarchal system that is even more pronounced in the technology sector. We center the organization in Womanism to be sure to take care of, fight for and liberate all marginalized people with a goal of building the social, financial and intellectual capital required to create status which is the ability to make change. If capitalism speaks to our free market desires and our individual need to make it on our own womanism in the is the context that will ensure that we all have access and opportunity to the free market and to acknowledge that we have not gotten here alone and we can instead increase our strength in community vs isolate our gifts by singular accomplishments and motivations.

Learning AND leading We learn to lead and we lead with what we learned. Our workforce development sector has been largely inefficient because we don't ask our learners for anything outside of getting the skill getting a job and gaining success by way of pay and position. This is a flat line and wastes the precious resource that we work so hard to develop. People. It's not until we give back, give to others, teach what we know that the training or learning has any meaning outside of ourselves. Also by teaching what we have learned we lock in the knowledge through a final context of connecting to another learner. It is when we make opportunities for others that we move beyond what we "get" to what we "give".

Trauma informed AND deliverables driven, it's an aesthetic, not a firm set of rules, it's adaptable, offered by people educated on the impact of trauma, aligned to i.c.stars mission to train underserved individuals. As vulnerability to violence and systematic barriers to personal & community care/protection lead to traumatic wounding, we hold people accountable to their deliverables and to their healing and provide resources for help sparked by the learner articulating where they are, where they want to go and what they have tried and gotten stuck on the way there.

Writing the rules AND identifying systemic oppression systems thinking is our jam. It starts there and then is applied to areas of community and areas of technology. We teach design thinking, learn startup canvas, the creative process, and organizer training in order to frame a problem at a systems level or root level in order to understand then deconstruct then synthesize and evaluate. Programmers write the rules, leaders question the rules and propose new rules but it all starts with a systems level understanding of what factors have been engaged in laying down systems to benefit or to disenfranchise groups of people.

This is a love letter, this is a poem of pedagogy, this is a leadership layout and we are looking for you. Someone who loves.

Someone who...

Loves learning

Loves innovation in education

Sees a complex model as an asset

Loves To lead out

Loves to learn and teach and learn and teach

Loves to facilitate transformation

Loves conducting

Loves design experience

Loves to build models built on learning objectives

Loves learners who will be charged with rebuilding systems

Loves the art of transformation and the science of learning

Loves adult education

Sandee Kastrul, Co-founder and CEO