



SERES

Transformative

Sustainability

Leadership





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EDITORS

Jacob Carter, Corrina Grace, Sherry Miller

DESIGNER

Christa Ponce

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For further information about
SERES programs, training opportunities
and activities
please visit www.seres.org or contact:

SERES

3865 Lakeshore Avenue
Oakland, CA 94610

Ph: +1 949 447 5566

Email: info@seres.org

SERES is a network of youth leaders, inspired, empowered and equipped to lead the transition towards a more peaceful, just and sustainable society in Central America's Northern Triangle.

SERES' youth leaders are the "unlikely" leaders, on the front lines of enormous political, social, environmental and economic changes, making a stand for justice and equality for people and the planet. They are brave, courageous, bold, passionate and committed.

United under the phrase "**Somos SERES**" (We are SERES), these young people are part of a family that crosses traditional boundaries of race, class, culture, politics, wealth, education and religion. Activators, change makers, movers and shakers, empowered with their own sense of agency and desire to create change, these young people are changing the status quo.





Transformative Sustainability Leadership



Today's interconnected global challenges - manifesting in the contemporary sustainability crisis that we see all around us - calls for nothing short of a transformation at every level of society. The scale of this transformation is beyond the work of a handful of great leaders. It requires a movement of leaders, a leaderful generation.

At a time when there are more young people than ever before, we must look to our youth as the prime movers of social change and leaders in innovation. Young people push boundaries, watch, listen, create, express, and ask hard questions, qualities which are needed more than ever.

SERES Transformative Sustainability Leadership (TSL) programs have been developed to foster these qualities, *empowering young people to navigate through emerging contexts, work collaboratively and step into committed and responsible leadership: **shaping the future they want, aligned to society's broader needs.***

WE ACHIEVE THIS BY



Providing education, training and skills building to prepare young people to step into roles as leaders, educators, entrepreneurs and changemakers;



Working with partner organizations to move youth through a pipeline into leadership positions within key sectors of society;



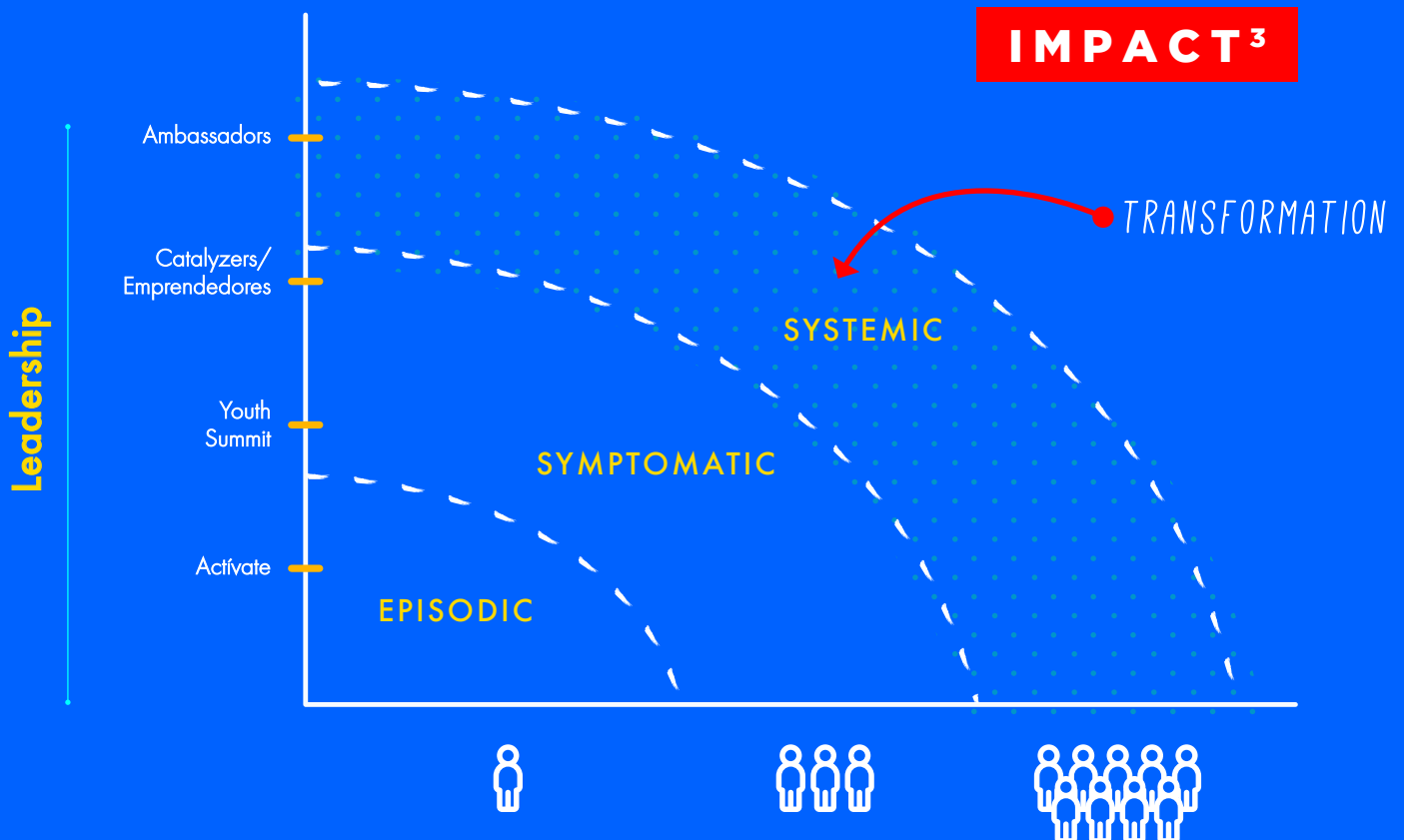
Hosting regional and international gatherings of youth sustainability leaders that cross traditional boundaries (cultural, religious, social etc) and create safe spaces for dialogue and learning;



Offering programs that bring together the diaspora of youth from both sides of the development divide to learn and understand from one another.

about SERES PROGRAMS

Within our programs, we look to create transformational impact both through individual leadership as well as through network effects.



SERES' programs have been conceptualised within nine learning spheres. These spheres are designed to develop core sustainability competencies and to provide the skills and experience to allow trainees to be highly effective and influential leaders.

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sphere 1

SUSTAINABILITY

Understanding the contemporary global sustainability crises, and the impact this has on social, environmental and economic challenges such as health, migration, climate, human rights, social and environmental justice and development.

sphere 2

**PERSONAL
MASTERY**

Cultivating the skills and processes to experience a higher level of self identity beyond the ordinary, reactive ego level, facilitating a journey from reactive constraints to proactive courage to creative consciousness.

sphere 3

EXPRESSION

Using voice work, body work, social media and other communication platforms to develop clear communications skills and build self-confidence

sphere 4

**LEADERSHIP
-IN-ACTION**

Exploring leadership as a verb, that requires doing, and an artform, that requires practice - informing the way that I work and walk in the world.

sphere 5

**SYSTEMS
TRANSFORMATION**

Developing a critical lense to recognize and understand game changing” solutions that move from symptomatic to systemic transformation.

sphere 6

**CITIZEN
MUSCLES**

Developing self-efficacy through active community engagement, that helps build the skills and contacts required to make changes happen

sphere 7

NETWORKING

Developing a self-supporting network with peer-to-peer support and mentoring to move from episodic to transformational change

sphere 8

PEACEBUILDING

Teaching about conflict mediation and peacebuilding training through non-competitive play!

sphere 9

**ACCELERATING
ACTIONS**

Teaching project planning tools and skills for innovation and creation to accelerate actions and increase impact

Any one of SERES' programs and networking events has a cross-cutting approach that draws on each of the nine spheres outlined above, taught in an interactive way that enables exploratory, action-oriented and transformative learning. The programs draw upon many teaching modalities including participatory action research, presencing, strategic questioning², human-centered design and appreciative inquiry. These techniques are designed to engage trainees at the levels of hearts and minds and teach them to move with interpersonal agility, compassion and equity-oriented systems thinking³.



about *the*
PROGRAMS

The TSL programs consist of a series of multi-day modules, using a funnel model that channels trainees to further training and leadership development opportunities. Entry-level provides easy access to trainees and more commitment and participation is required as they move deeper into the funnel.

Youth from the Impact³ Leadership series are trained to provide mentoring and facilitation at the entry levels, helping to provide both horizontal and vertical support for youth within the network and strengthen the youth-led initiatives.

The programs that SERES currently offers are outlined below.

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changemakers

SERIES

The Changemakers series is designed to inspire a new generation of young leaders and changemakers to co-create creative change from a community level. The key outcomes of the series are *educating* trainees about the urgent global challenges and opportunities faced by people and the Planet, *empowering* trainees to discover their power of agency, and the conviction that they can change the status quo and *engaging* trainees to take a proactive role in designing and implementing community initiatives that build resilience and strengthen community, inspiring others to do the same.

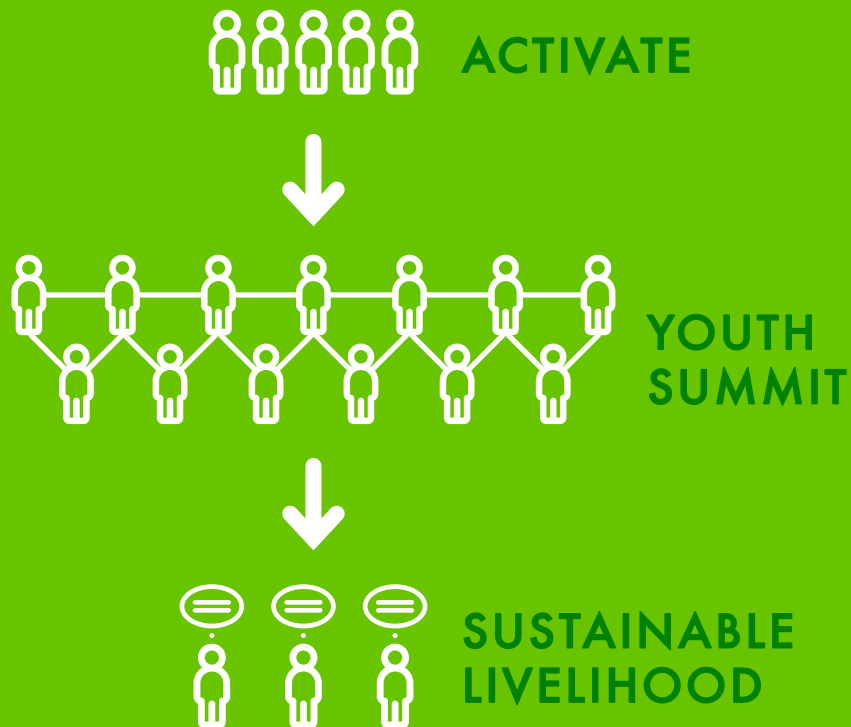
The desired outcome for the Changemakers series is a network of young community leaders with a high level of personal confidence who are actively working to create positive change in their communities.

The Changemakers series has three key modules:

The Activate Community Congresses

The Youth Sustainability Summit

The Sustainable Livelihoods program





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COMMUNITY CONGRESSES

ACTIVATE is a peer-led 3-day community congress. The purpose of **ACTIVATE** is to foster a culture of environmental awareness and sustainability through collaboration and shared leadership to help youth develop community vision and critical thinking about pressing social-environmental issues.

At this entry-level, all participants come from the same community or surrounding villages and participation is open to anyone aged 15-30 years. Each program has on average 25-30 trainees. The congress process is built around community activist Fran Peavey's strategic questioning technique⁴ within an appreciative leadership framework and includes the *following key components*:

Pulse of the Planet

Providing an introduction into climate change and the global sustainability crises, and the impact this has on community development such as agricultural production, economic livelihoods, community resilience, health, migration, access to water and human rights.

Be the Change

Using tools such as the ecological footprint, trainees develop an inventory of the ecological impact of behaviour, purchasing decisions and lifestyle has. These inventories then allow trainees to set goals related to personal change that will help bring them into alignment with the change that they wish to see in their communities.

Pulse of the Community

Using exploratory learning and action research, trainees explore their communities to identify intergenerational changes, pressures, stresses and areas of concern.

Community Action Planning

The action planning component of the congress gives trainees the opportunity to translate their visions and change strategies into tangible goals. This component exposes trainees for the first time to project planning, using a simple yet effective methodology to identify goals, milestones, resources and other elements necessary for a successful initiative.

Community visioning

Using mindfulness practices and an arts-based creative approach, trainees work together to envision their community as a place where they can thrive.

Community Forum

The congress culminates with trainees presenting their Community Action Plans to local authorities and stakeholders. This becomes an opportunity for the wider community to see trainees in their new youth leadership role. It also provides a space for the trainees to seek collaboration and support from the local community.

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YOUTH sustainability SUMMIT

The purpose of the Youth Sustainability Summit is to create a rich and interactive learning environment for young leaders driven through peer-learning which fosters the development of a regional network of changemakers.

The summit is a 4.5-day camp that draws together over 50 young changemakers from across Guatemala and El Salvador together with peer-mentors, partner community organizations and trainers for a hands-on, hearts-on networking and skills-building event. At this level, participation is only open to youth who have already participated in Actívate and who have already started implementing their Community Action Plan developed in the first program.

The desired outcome of the program is for trainees to enrich the youth network and each other with their dynamism and diversity while increasing their effectiveness as young changemakers both individually and collectively.

components

personal discovery

Offered by a peer-trainer with experience in facilitating journeys of personal discovery, particularly those that involve trauma, this component helps trainees explore their own journeys of past, present and future.

leading through voice & movement

This track works to build self-confidence and articulation skills through a theatre-based workshop on communication, voice and body language.

technical tracks

These components cover themes such as sustainable water catchment, renewable energy, agroecology, nutrition, sexual health and reproduction and climate change. The themes for the tracks are identified by youth prior to the Summit, and are offered by community partners and other local CBOs and NGO.

team building

A number of components including a 3-hr Practice Peace session help trainees to understand the dynamics of leading/following and group work, developing a critical understand of the roles that these play in the trainee's own work, as well as strengthening the bonds within the network.

communications

This component teaches about the use of communication tools such as social media to engage an audience, build and strengthen community and raise awareness.

financial management

This component develops a basic understanding of project finances and gives participants the opportunity to develop a budget and financial plan for their Community Action Plans that can be used for grant-seeking purposes.

sustainable

LIVELIHOODS PROGRAM

The purpose of the Sustainable Livelihoods program is to build the capacity of entrepreneurs, village leaders, local organizations, and community networks to support socio-economic development in at-risk and marginalized communities.

The program achieves this by providing specialized technical training related to economic and community development for youth that have come through the first two modules in SERES' changemakers series. The program is a 5-day residential training that includes two days of theory and three days of practice. SERES currently offers two different technical tracks, entrepreneurship and agriculture and agroforestry.



entrepreneurship

The entrepreneurship technical track, trainees are provided with the *necessary skills to initiate businesses, make healthy and productive lifestyle choices, and reinforce professional skills in the workforce*. The program also emphasises values-based leadership to promote entrepreneurship that is socially and environmentally-conscientious and economically inclusive.

components

- Fundamentals and concepts of entrepreneurship and business.
- Participatory context analysis and generation of startup ideas.
- Formulating and testing business models.
- Implementation, evaluation and reiteration.

agriculture & agroforestry

This technical track offers agricultural development for subsistence and small farmers. Trainees learn about the importance of the interrelationships between environmental health, economic prosperity, biodiversity and social values as it relates to agricultural practices. Through hands-on learning participants develop an understanding of how sustainable farming practices and conservation-friendly land use can work to improve soil fertility, increase biodiversity, support healthy communities and contribute to increased food sovereignty over time.

components

- Overview of Guatemala's biodiversity, local and regional threats, risks and conservation issues.
- Agricultural practices in the tropics and their impacts on biodiversity and ecosystem health.
- Exploring traditional practices and ancient wisdom associated with the use of biological resources.
- Design principles for sustainable agricultural production.
- Hands-on training in design, analysis and implementation of productive, sustainable agricultural systems.
- Community action planning.

IMPACT³

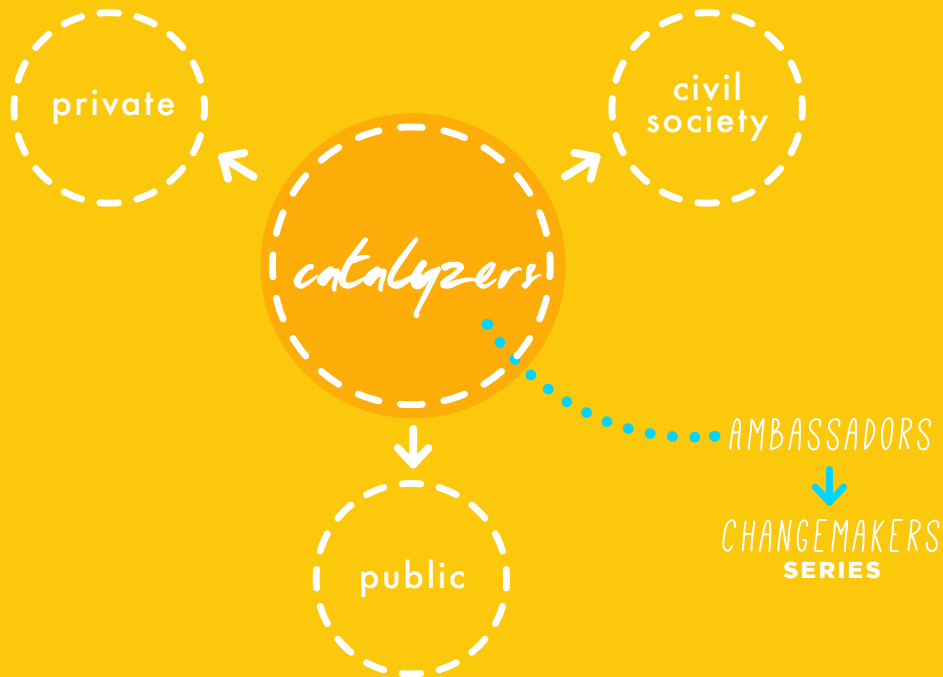
Leadership

SERIES

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The purpose of the Impact³ Leadership series is to invest in emerging young leaders, providing them with the capacity building, practical training and experience to step into positions of leadership and influence in their communities and beyond.

Following the Catalyzers program, SERES partners with local organizations that specialize in entrepreneurship, citizenship/civic education and movement building and activism, thereby supporting these emerging leaders to receive the necessary preparation and training to enter the workforce and be positive figures of influence in the private, public and civil society sectors. From these positions, these young leaders work to promote sustainable community development, simultaneously addressing economic, environmental and social concerns to ensure a prosperous, healthy community now and in generations to come.



Graduates of the Catalyzers program are also *invited to become SERES Ambassadors*, where they have the opportunity to act as trainers for youth entering into the Changemakers programmatic series. In this way, we help to build a distributed yet highly connected network of activators, changemakers, leaders and entrepreneurs that are working to lead the transition towards new life-sustaining systems and societies.

CATALYZERS

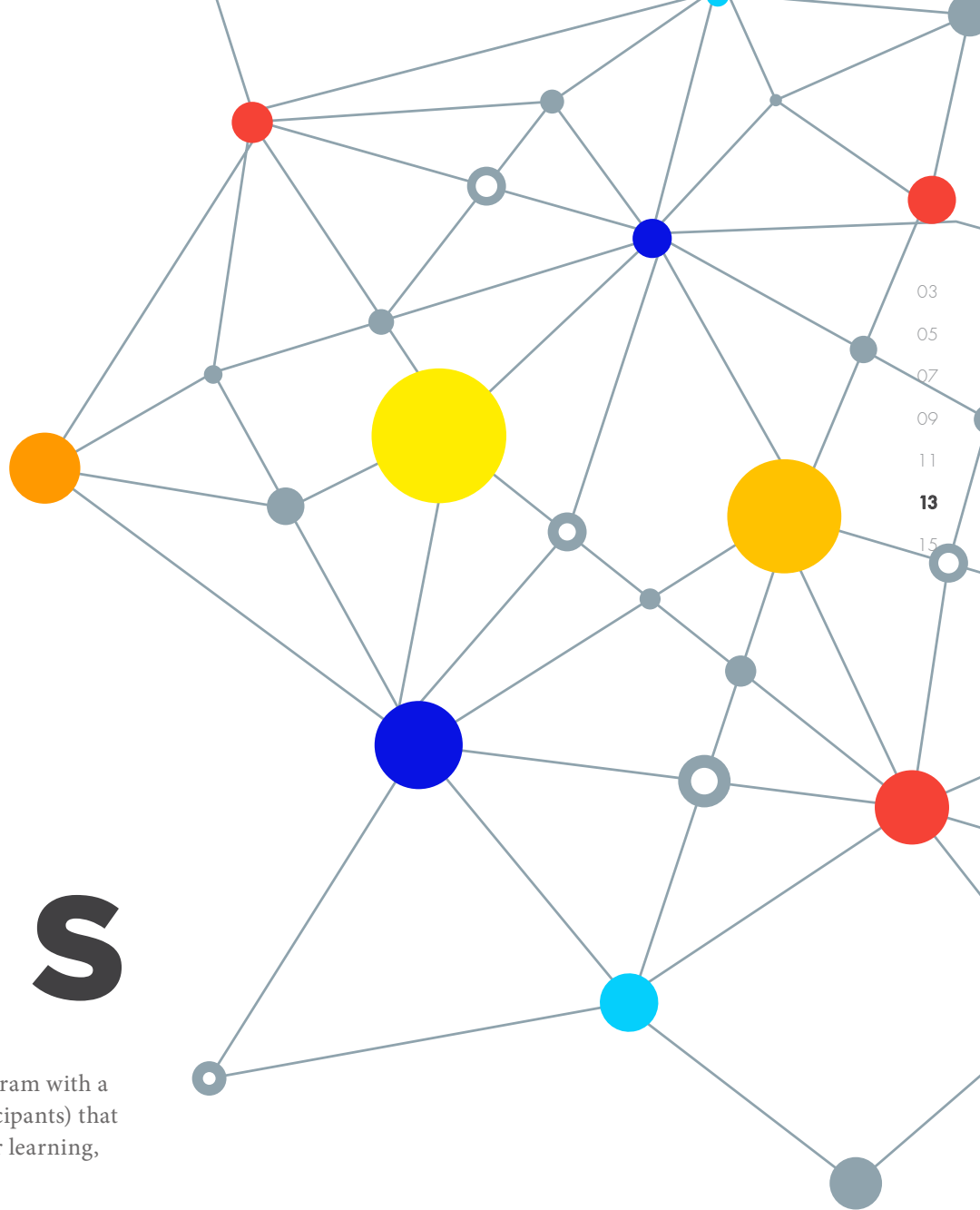
Catalyzers is a 7-day residential program with a small, focused cohort (max. 16 participants) that offers a safe, transformative space for learning, connection and transformation.

The purpose of this program is to train young change agents to be highly effective facilitators of community change processes by providing them with the tools for transformation.

Trainees learn to facilitate processes that increase young people's impact as leaders and agents of change, such as the Activate Community Congress. In addition to the 7-day training, trainees undertake a 3-day practical, co-facilitating alongside an accredited SERES facilitator.

Participants in this program are drawn from SERES' Changemaker Series or nominated by other organizations that work in partnership with SERES. To be eligible, all applicants must be able to demonstrate proven leadership and active engagement in the sustainable development of their communities.

The desired outcomes of this program are young people that are that are working at the intra- and interpersonal community levels and that are able to inspire and motivate others - particularly youth - to move with them.



The Catalyzers program covers the following core components:

truth mandala⁵

The Truth Mandala draws from deep ecology and buddhist spiritual traditions to offer a ritualized practice that helps trainees to explore their inner response to the suffering in the world. The ritual builds connection, motivation, creativity, courage and solidarity and helps to connect participants to a deep sense of purpose around their role as changemakers.

collaborative facilitation

Learning to facilitate conversational and interactive processes that harness the collective wisdom and self-organizing capacity of groups.

deep listening

Trainees learn about deep listening as a powerful tool for transformation, and practice with each other learning to listening in a way that is generous, empathic, supportive, accurate and trusting.

network building

Trainees become active nodes in the network that are initiating and sustaining a strong community of diverse young leaders. Connections between Catalyzers help to create an interconnected and self-sufficient learning system working towards systemic impact.

play for peace

Trainees learn to use non-competitive play as a tool for overcoming conflict and building community. This component is also used as an opportunity for self-reflection about leadership qualities, and to help trainees develop an understanding of our interconnected and interdependent world as it relates to the contemporary sustainability crises

strategic questioning

Trainees learn to use this powerful tool for transformation, based on activist scholar Fran Peavey's framework, which has helped communities around the world to successfully tackle issues of peace, justice and ecology.

somatics

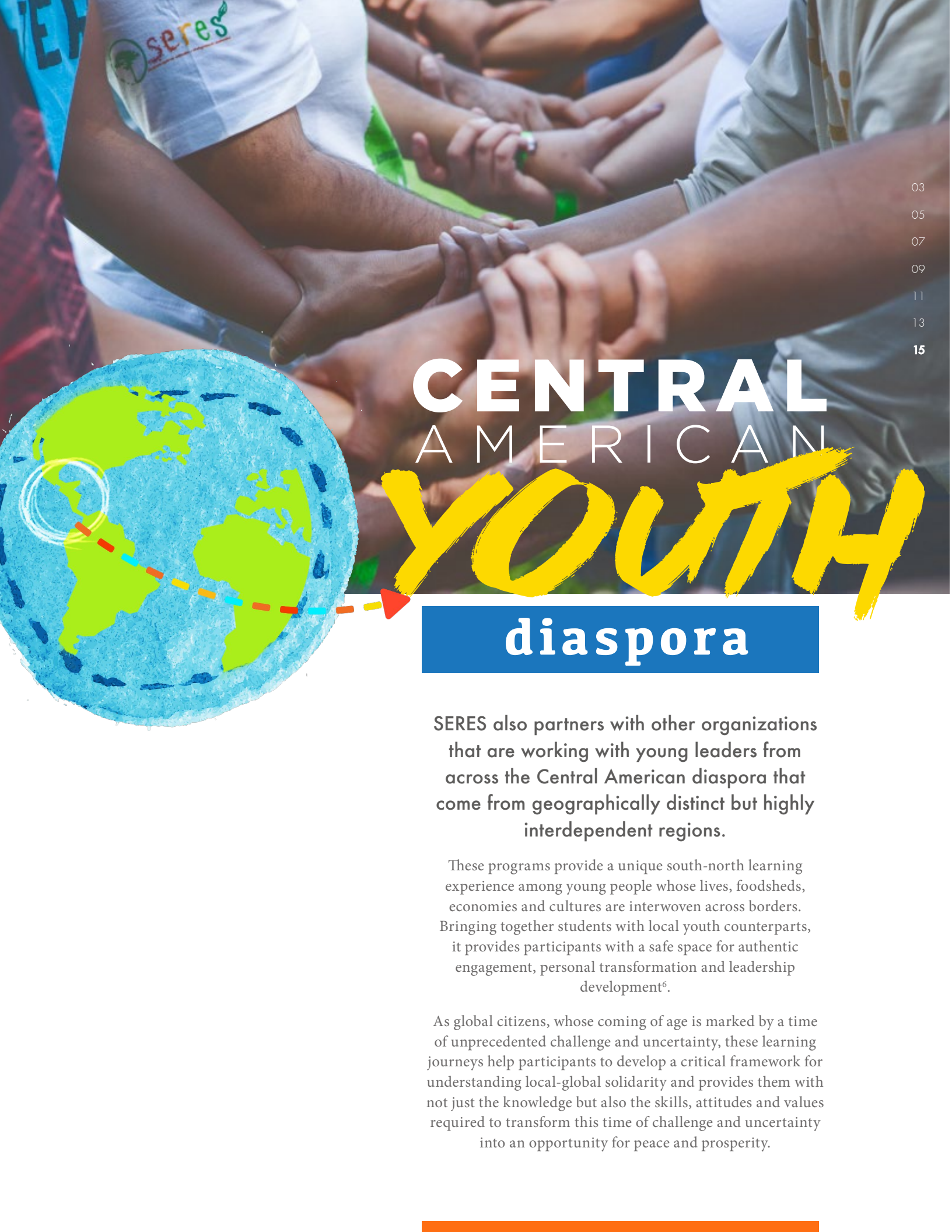
Helps participants to access emotional and intuitive resources, using somatic coaching and power poses to learn to lead with greater clarity, confidence and authenticity. This component is particularly powerful in work with young women and indigenous participants coming from marginalized communities.

improv theatre

We use theatre games, activities and performance to help trainees to develop confidence, as well as the skills to clearly and effectively communicate.

appreciative leadership

drawing from appreciative inquiry, appreciative leadership is taught as a framework through which trainees may practice their leadership, emphasizing positive questions and collaborative inquiry as a source for enhanced performance and creating common purpose



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CENTRAL AMERICAN

YOUTH

diaspora

SERES also partners with other organizations that are working with young leaders from across the Central American diaspora that come from geographically distinct but highly interdependent regions.

These programs provide a unique south-north learning experience among young people whose lives, foodsheds, economies and cultures are interwoven across borders. Bringing together students with local youth counterparts, it provides participants with a safe space for authentic engagement, personal transformation and leadership development⁶.

As global citizens, whose coming of age is marked by a time of unprecedented challenge and uncertainty, these learning journeys help participants to develop a critical framework for understanding local-global solidarity and provides them with not just the knowledge but also the skills, attitudes and values required to transform this time of challenge and uncertainty into an opportunity for peace and prosperity.





references & acknowledgements

¹Play for Peace (www.playforpeace.org) is a partner organization of SERES that brings together children, youth and organizations from communities in conflict, using cooperative play to create laughter, compassion and peace.

²A tool for personal and community transformation developed by activist scholar Fran Peavey.

³More details on SERES framework can be found in our Theory of Change.

⁴Based on OzGREEN's Youth Leading the World congress, which draws from social activist Fran Peavey's strategic questioning framework.

⁵First emerging in 1978, this pioneering, open-source body of work has its roots in the teachings and experiential methods of activist scholar Joanna Macy.

⁶This body of work was first developed in collaboration between SERES and UC Irvine's Sustainability Initiative, and continues to be led as an emerging project by SERES Principal Corrina Grace and UCI SI's Director Abigail Reyes.

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For more information visit: www.seres.org

5ta Avenida Sur, #2,
San Juan del Obispo, Guatemala

Phone: +1 949 447 5566 | Email: info@seres.org

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