

Report: Community in Focus Workshops

Soulshine Festival 2025

Rajie Kabli, Paz Ciuk and Anas Attia

Overview

The Soulshine 2025 Festival hosted a vibrant and engaging 2-day workshop designed to bring community members together in a spirit of collaboration, creativity, and collective visioning. The workshop was co-led by Rajie Kabli, Paz Ciuk, and other facilitators, with the intention of introducing key community segments (Utility, Construction, Food & Culture) and fostering dialogue that could continue beyond the festival. Within each segment, two leaders were identified in advance to present on their area of focus and guide group discussions.

One of the primary goals of the workshops and this subsequent report is to engage the community in year-round segment-based networking and practical projects that support us on our community-building journey.

We encourage the community to be supportive and participative in this process as much as possible. What keeps these segments relevant and engaging is the promise to take action as we continue moving forward.

This report will first outline from a 'high-level' what happened during the 2-days, how the workshops were structured and what outcomes were derived. After that, the report provides a deep dive into each segment (Food, Construction, Utility & Culture) with a summary and a detailed breakdown of what was discussed with the groups.

We invite you to explore this in-depth report with openness and stay tuned for updates regarding connecting with the segment groups and their various projects. We thank all those that participated and thank you for reading.

Objectives

- Introduce participants to core focus areas of any thriving community (e.g., food, culture/governance, construction, utility/economy).
- Provide a safe and inclusive space for dialogue and networking among members with shared interests.
- Identify potential projects, resources, skills, leaders, and capacities.
- Lay the groundwork for ongoing collaboration through digital groups and future gatherings.

Structure & Agenda

Day 1 – Inspiration & Introductions

- **Opening:** Paz and Rajie welcomed participants, shared inspiration for organizing the workshop, and Paz led the group through a grounding envisioning practice.
- **Presentations by segment leads:** Each focus area was introduced by facilitators who shared insights, knowledge, and opportunities. The four segments highlighted this year were: **Food, Construction, Culture, and Utility**. Audience members were invited to ask relevant, focused questions during each session, with broader or more complex inquiries encouraged for Day 2's group time.
- **Community mapping:** Following the presentations, participants identified up to two segments of interest. They were invited to reflect not only on areas of curiosity but also on where their skills, abilities, and resources could be of immediate service.
- **Reflection & sharing:** Conversations continued informally after the session, with participants expressing excitement, curiosity, and hope about the potential of the segments. Many looked forward to deeper engagement on Day 2.

Day 2 – Action & Next Steps

- **Small group breakouts:** Participants met in their chosen segments to introduce themselves, share resources and project ideas, and brainstorm potential priorities. Two 40-minute sessions were held, with leads remaining present to welcome the second round of participants.
- **Practical planning:** Names, emails, and phone numbers were collected, and initial steps were outlined for creating Telegram groups, scheduling Zoom calls, and ensuring accessibility for those who could not attend in person. Participants were also strongly encouraged to engage with the community portal for questions, feedback, and ideas.
- **Closing:** We ended with a collective intention-setting for the continuation of Soulshine's work and a reminder that this was only the beginning.

Participation

- **Attendees:** Approx. 100–130 across the two days.
- **Segment groups & leads:**
 - Food: Keith & Keith
 - Currency/Utility: Anas Attia & Alex Barker (Panda)
 - Governance & Culture: Sandra McGregor & Kirstie Smallman
 - Construction: Catherine Lafond & Patrick Ellard

Key Outcomes

- Segment leads are committed to holding the container for their respective areas throughout the year, serving as contact points for ideas and inquiries.
- Draft plans for digital spaces (Telegram groups, Zoom calls) to sustain momentum.
- Commitment to share a digital replay of Day 1 for those unable to attend.
- Strong enthusiasm for building continuity beyond the festival.

Feedback & Reflections

- Participants valued the inclusive, heart-centred facilitation style.
- The structure balanced inspiration with practical planning.
- Some requested clearer timelines and follow-up mechanisms.
- While the 2–3 minute sharing limit kept discussions flowing, some wished for more time to go deeper.
- Strong enthusiasm for integrating those unable to attend in person.
- Facilitators and participants alike expressed excitement at the wealth of knowledge, talent, and resources present in the community, affirming the belief that everyone has a role in shaping the collective vision.

Challenges

- Time constraints limited the depth of group work.
- Some segment roles required further definition and follow-up.
- New potential segments emerged (e.g., enterprise, water, protection/safety).
- Digital organization (Telegram groups and community management) is still in development.

1. Economy/Utility Segment - Insights & Next Steps

The Economy/Utility breakout focused on how we build real resilience together—rooted in trust and reciprocity—while being practical about operating in today’s outside economy. The group named a dual-path approach: keep “relationships first” and explore what gift culture can look like for bare essentials, then layer fair trading and income-sharing for everything else so value tracks meaning, not just money. We sketched an internal economy stack to test in small, learnable steps: a token + ledger sandbox (with analog/offline backups), weighted income-sharing in active ventures, pooled capital for smarter investments, and a near-term multi-use hub to anchor production and coordination. Risks like centralization, hoarding, valuation disputes, and legal/technical fragility were called out early, with matching guardrails—transparent governance, mediation norms, demurrage/expiry options, and clear PMA boundaries. The spirit was experimental and accountable: prototype, measure, adjust, and keep liquidity circulating through relationships so our economy strengthens the culture we want to live in.

What the group cares about (principles & vibes)

- **Sovereignty & resilience** (PMA/UA structures; local food, housing, health, education).
- **Money as energy** (heal worthiness/debased labor; align value with meaning).
- **Relationships first** (trust & cooperation as the primary “currency”).
- **Gift for essentials; trade for surplus** (non-transactional baseline with room for innovation/merit).
- **Dual-path realism** (operate in the outside economy while building an inside one).
- **Open-source ethic & experimentation** (iterate, learn, adapt without dogma).

Ideas & initiatives the group surfaced

- **Internal economy stack:** service/labour-backed tokens, income-sharing, gift-based safety net, analog + digital ledgers.
- **Anti-hoarding currency design:** demurrage/expiry; clear “no fractional reserve” stance.
- **Income-sharing logic:** weight by responsibility, impact, time, role (vs flat hours).
- **Sovereign infra:** private servers, offline-first records, secure off-site storage.
- **Venture incubation:** Elixir Bar, tent rentals, beekeeping, other low-capex/high-ROI micro-businesses.
- **Pooled capital:** e.g., \$1K per member vehicle for smarter, larger investments.
- **Hub strategy:** near-term multi-use space (production/meeting/co-residential), longer-term land & self-sufficiency.
- **Knowledge scan:** learn from kibbutzim, local currencies (e.g., green dollars/Peterborough bucks), Ubuntu/One Small Town—study failures early.

Skills & assets present (to leverage)

- **Active ventures** (Elixir Bar, Pantry, event rental operations).
- **Finance & bookkeeping** (income-sharing design, ledger templates).
- **Tech ops** (server/ledger architecture).
- **Cottage-industry skills** (beekeeping, food production).
- **Research & policy** (PMA operations, comparative community models).

Challenges (themes to work on)

- **Valuation & fairness** across diverse services without rigid price controls.
- **Liquidity & hoarding** risks in a small economy.
- **Centralization creep** vs. the need for decisive leadership.
- **Legal/compliance boundaries** (mortgages, advertising, PMA limits).
- **Technical fragility** (hardware backdoors, outages; need analog fallbacks).
- **Burnout & inequity** (lifecycles, care burdens, role rotation).
- **Macro risk** (inflation/supply chains) → urgency for internal production/exchange.

30–60 day quick-win pilots

1. **Currency & ledger sandbox:** paper tokens + mirrored digital log; trial expiring tokens; run “play-money” simulations to test valuation models.
2. **Income-sharing v1:** apply the weighted formula to Elixir Bar & tent rentals; review “perceived fairness” after first cycle.
3. **Member directory & demand map:** capture skills, offers, needs, availability; publish a “market bulletin” (e.g., eggs, childcare, tech support).
4. **Hub shortlist:** compare lease vs purchase; define phased activation (production, meetings, limited co-residential).
5. **Pooled-capital sketch:** propose a light-weight community savings/trust with a simple investment policy.
6. **Research cell:** produce a brief on PMAs, local currency case studies (incl. demurrage), Ubuntu/One Small Town—focus on why models fail/succeed.

Simple metrics to learn fast

- **Currency health:** token velocity, % tokens expiring, redemption rate, circulating supply.
- **Fairness signal:** post-cycle survey on compensation fairness (1–5) + dispute count/resolution time.
- **Participation:** # members in directory, % with active offers/needs, match rate, hours exchanged.
- **Venture results:** gross margin, revenue per labor hour, profit-share satisfaction.
- **Resilience:** # successful analog↔digital reconciliations, audit discrepancies per month.
- **Hub progress:** # sites evaluated, time to first activation, utilization hours.

Open questions to carry forward

- How do we set **flexible, fair valuation** without price police?
- Which **circulation mechanisms** (demurrage/expiry) best match our culture?
- Where are the **PMA edges** in real-world ops (mortgages, ads, compliance)?
- What's the **sovereign ledger/server** architecture (costs, governance, maintenance)?
- Who governs **issuance/credit/investment** (vetoes, leadership, dispute resolution)?
- How do we **sequence ventures** (capital need, ROI, skills, market access)?

Risks & mitigations (at a glance)

- **Centralization** → transparent governance, distributed records, veto thresholds.
- **Hoarding/liquidity traps** → demurrage, targeted issuance, community treasury.
- **Valuation conflicts** → guidance ranges, bilateral negotiation, mediation norms.
- **Tech fragility** → analog-primary backups, offline-first ops, periodic audits.
- **Legal exposure** → PMA architecture, parallel inside/outside pathways, member education.
- **Burnout/inequity** → lifecycle-aware policies, rest norms, role rotation, impact-weighted pay.

2. Construction Segment - Insights & Next Steps

The workshops marked a bold and inspiring step forward, bringing together people eager to share their visions, skills, and experiences. The energy was spontaneous and authentic, and the quality of participation was exceptional. Many attendees offered valuable expertise and resources. Moving forward, using organizational tools such as a preliminary spreadsheet to track skills and projects could help focus this momentum into tangible action. It may also be helpful to engage members with strong administrative or coordination abilities to support next steps. Overall, the workshops were uplifting and well-attended, leaving a strong sense of possibility and excitement for future gatherings, projects, and the progress to come in the year ahead.

What The Group Cared About (principles & vibes)

- **Responsibility & accountability** as the core of sovereignty; people explicitly offered monthly hours to the project.
- **Belonging, safety, and inclusion** (reduce “outsider” feelings; create warm on-ramps).
- **Clear container for emotional hygiene** so builds don’t derail (own projections; shared language; repair skills).
- **Heart-led leadership + reciprocity** (walk your talk; learn to both give and receive).
- **Creativity, art, play woven into workdays**—joyful, not just “labour.”
- **Freedom with courtesy** and mission focus (remember why we started).

Ideas & Initiatives the group surfaced (applied to construction)

- **Natural-building knowledge into practice:** convert know-how into builder onboarding + site-day facilitation so learning is embodied and safe.
- **Role assignment by passion/aptitude** (reduce conflict; “duties aligned to hearts,” not only resumes).
- **Plain-language PMA orientation for build crews** (rights/limits, safety, liability inside the private).
- **Offer/Need & hours pledge board** for builds (e.g., members pledging ~20 hrs/mo).
- **Learn from other communities** (ICs/co-ops) to avoid known failure modes.
- **Connection mixers** to reduce clique dynamics before team assignments.
- **Gratitude/reflection rituals** to stabilize crew culture during intense phases.

Skills & Resources

- Architecture / natural building, co-op governance, farm/garden logistics, kitchen/first-aid/event ops, facilitation & conflict-resolution literacy, and multiple people ready to pledge hours.

Challenges (themes to work on)

- **Resource constraints** (“strong bones, lacking resources”) → plan phased builds and pooled tools.
- **Onboarding & shared language** (PMA terms, expectations) → concise crew briefings.
- **Inclusion & cross-pollination** (early outsider/clique energy) → intentional mixing.
- **Emotional safety on site** (train to own projections; non-force participation norms).
- **Burnout/anxiety in core crew** → normalize pace, rotation, and rest.

30–60 Day ‘Quick-Win’ Pilots

1. **Crew Onboarding Hour (every build day)**: 15-min PMA-in-plain-English + safety + “how we raise/repair” + buddy assignment.
2. **Offers/Needs & Hours Pledge**: simple form + wall; assign people to roles by passion/aptitude first.
3. **Natural-Building Primer**: 90-min intro from an experienced builder/architect; pick 1–2 priority techniques to prototype safely.
4. **Connection Mixer before tool-up**: speed-meet rounds to dissolve cliques and balance teams.
5. **Gratitude/De-stress loop**: 5-minute close-out ritual + weekly online gratitude sync during build sprints.
6. **Borrowed Wisdom**: invite a guest from a long-running co-op/IC to share “what fails on builds & why.”

Simple Metrics to Learn Fast

- **Belonging**: % first-timers who report ≥ 3 new connections by day’s end.
- **Capacity**: pledged hours vs. utilized hours; # trained crew per role.
- **Safety & harmony**: # incidents/conflicts; time-to-repair after a “raised concern.”
- **Retention**: % who return for ≥ 2 additional build days.
- **Clarity**: onboarding NPS + “still unclear about X?” responses.

Risks & Mitigations

- **Centralization & control creep** → transparent crew selection, rotating leads, clear escalation.
- **Cultural friction on site** → one-page “raise & repair” card; micro-circles at lunch.
- **Volunteer burnout** → timeboxing, role rotation, explicit rest norms.
- **Confusion about PMA boundaries** → 5-minute legal/ops briefing; Q&A channel.
- **Resource shortfalls** → phased scope, shared tool library, targeted pledges before each sprint.

Questions to Carry Forward

- What minimum emotional-hygiene practices should every build facilitator have?

- Which 1–2 natural-building methods are most realistic for our first pilots?
- How do we balance freedom with courtesy on noisy/impactful tasks (neighbours, site rules)?
- What belongs in a plain-language PMA build brief (risk, tools, roles, consent, media)?
- How do we keep newcomers from feeling like outsiders on Day 1?

3. Culture Segment - Insights & Next Steps

The session felt fast and somewhat short, leaving a desire for more time to deepen the exploration. Discussions were open-ended, asking reflective questions to invite different perspectives. The conversation was engaging but remained general; with more time, we could reach greater specificity and create smaller focus groups within the larger Culture segment. We read and referred to the PMA, as many participants had signed it without reading, which sparked meaningful discussions. There was a shared excitement about where this energy could lead. We recognized the importance of supporting ourselves and others in developing emotional intelligence, bridging the gap between mental concepts and embodied understanding. Emphasis was placed on inclusivity and integrating academic or mental frameworks with other forms of communication. Our first inquiry—what “culture” means to each person—opened heartfelt exchanges that felt like a “heart tank think tank” on how to recreate ourselves. The experience activated a curiosity to learn more about other communities and appreciate our diverse nuances.

What The Group Cared About (principles & vibes)

- **Responsibility & accountability** (sovereignty = taking responsibility; reliable follow-through).
- **Belonging & inclusion** (being received without judgement; “outsider → insider” pathways).
- **Recognition & meaning** (contributions noticed; work aligned to purpose).
- **Kindness, safety, vulnerability, transparency** (space to be real; equanimity).
- **Creativity, art, play, joy** (infuse culture with making, music, dance, games).
- **Healing & self-knowledge** (inner work first; diverse modalities; gratitude practices).
- **Freedom with courtesy** (PMA as a container for autonomy + mutual respect).
- **Heart-led leadership & reciprocity** (walk your talk; give and receive).
- **Shared identity** (clear “who we are/are not,” while celebrating diversity).

Ideas & Initiatives That Surfaced

- **Creativity engine:** regular art/maker circles, dance/music jams, “play labs,” community showcases.
- **Expand Healing Forest capacity:** more healers/modalities, better scheduling, training/mentorship for new practitioners.
- **Connection mixers:** intentional cross-group mingling to dissolve cliques (speed-meeting, table rotations, “buddy of the day”).
- **Gratitude & reflection rituals:** weekly gratitude sync (already happening), daily 10–15 min self-check prompts, closing circles.
- **Plain-language PMA orientation:** short, friendly explainer + Q&A; shared vocabulary guide.

- **“Offer → Need” board:** members publicly post skills, hours/month they can give (one person proposed ~20 hrs/mo), and needs.
- **Heart-aligned roles:** assign duties by passion/aptitude rather than resume; mentorship ladders.
- **Book clubs/culture nights:** readings from Standards & Ethics and adjacent texts; dialogue-based learning.
- **Learn from other communities:** map & visit exemplars (co-ops, eco-villages, IC directory); invite knowledge-shares.
- **Food resilience practices:** garden work parties, seed exchanges, coordinated pest-response days (success story shared).

Skills & Resources

- Healing arts (multiple modalities), yoga/meditation facilitation, natural building/architecture, event ops (kitchen, first aid), co-op governance experience, farming, conflict-resolution literacy (NVC/BRAVING), facilitation, arts/music, and people willing to pledge monthly hours.

Challenges (themes to work on)

- **Capacity & resources:** healing sessions over-subscribed; general resource constraints.
- **Onboarding & inclusion:** some felt outsider/clique dynamics at first; need warm onramps.
- **Shared language & expectations:** PMA terms, spirituality gradients, and culture vocabulary can confuse new folks.
- **Non-force participation:** allow varied involvement levels without pressure while still inviting responsibility.
- **Structure for emotional hygiene:** containers & training to manage projections and conflict consistently.
- **Anxiety/burnout:** some core crew wound tight—need to restore/relax norms and rotation.
- **Mission focus:** keep “why we started” (freedom + community care) in view as we grow.

30–60 Day ‘Quick-Win’ Pilots

1. **Culture Onboarding Hour** (every Social/Festival day 1): 20-min PMA-in-plain-English + “how we co-create” + speed-connecting.
2. **Offer/Need & Hours Pledge Wall** (physical + Telegram): simple template: “I offer X (2–4 hrs/wk). I need Y.”
3. **Healing Forest Scale-Up Sprint:** recruit 10 new practitioners, set up a booking board, pair each with a mentor, and publish a code of care.
4. **Play Night (monthly):** low-lift arts/games jam to seed creativity + belonging.
5. **Gratitude & Reflection Loop:** keep the weekly gratitude meet; add a daily micro-prompt in chat (self-check, reciprocity, boundary check).

6. **Conflict-Lite Toolkit:** one-page “how we raise & repair” card (own projections → request → repair); 60-min practice circle each Social.

Simple Metrics to Learn Fast

- **Belonging:** newcomers who form new connections (self-report after mixers).
- **Healing capacity:** # sessions offered vs. waitlisted; # new practitioners onboarded.
- **Participation:** total pledged hours/month; # offers matched to needs.
- **Burnout guardrails:** crew self-ratings on stress (1–5) pre/post event
- **Clarity:** PMA orientation NPS + “still unclear about X?” responses.

Questions To Carry Forward

- What’s our one-line identity that balances freedom + courtesy + healing + play?
- How do we protect “non-consumer” culture as we scale?
- What minimum emotional-hygiene practices become baseline for all facilitators?
- Where do we want arts & healing to visibly live across the year (not just the Festival)?

4. Food Segment - Insights & Next Steps

The workshops sparked genuine excitement and inspiration. Many participants felt deeply connected to the shared vision and expressed a strong desire to keep collaborating. It was a beautiful opportunity for the community to come together and share ideas, passion, and expertise around the many possibilities related to food. The intentions, skills, and willingness to bring this to life are all here; now it's about taking the next step. We anticipate the beginning will move at a gentle pace to accommodate everyone's busy schedules, and over time, we'll find the right rhythm and structure to integrate this work into our regular calendar.

What The Group Cared About (principles & vibes)

- **Food sovereignty & year-round security** (grow, forage, preserve, distribute locally; "food as medicine").
- **Practical regionalism** (organized by geography; meet up for hands-on days).
- **PMA-based sharing & trade** (Pantry as default channel for members).
- **Learn-by-doing culture** (beginner-friendly onramps in gardening, soil biology, preservation).

Ideas & Initiatives That Surfaced

- **Regional collaboration model:** subgroups (e.g., Halton/Hamilton; Collingwood/Blue Mountains; Georgina/Newmarket; Toronto/Etobicoke; London/SW Ontario; Lindsay/Muskoka; Owen Sound/Grey) with rotating foraging/field days and processing parties.
- **Market Gardens, Permaculture and Foraging:** An equal measure of effort to make up the foundation of a sustainable and resilient food system
- **Land & production pipeline:**
 - Muskoka (Raymond): community livestock (pay-per-lb or labour-offset).
 - Grey County (Durham): garden space, monthly moms/aunties gatherings, herbalism mentorship.
 - Collingwood/Beaver Valley: apple abundance → drying, sauces, vinegars; freeze-dryer interest.
 - Georgina/Elm Grove Farm: organic veg collective, partnership potential.
- **Animal sources:** salmon/trout charter days → smoke/can/broth; start with eggs/chickens, scale to hunting practices. Concern with large animal husbandry
- **Indoor & winter growing:** basements/containers, microgreens/sprouts; airflow & pest protocols; geodesic/irrigation expertise in network.
- **Preservation & value-add:** canning, dehydrating (incl. solar), ferments, vinegars; pantry branding/labels/jars; shared freeze-dryer.

- **Hubs & distribution:** Pantry as multi-hub system (central pack + regional pickups); enable **member resellers**; cold-chain planning.
- **Seasonal community projects:** garlic planting socials; urban maple syrup co-boils; youth food-security education.

Skills & Resources

- **Organic farming & CSA ops;** soil biology/compost (microscopy); herbalism & tinctures; foraging leads; processing equipment (dehydrators); irrigation/plumbing & build skills; nutrition & addiction-recovery coaching; youth education; sales/marketing for property/government outreach; policy/co-op governance know-how.
- **Land & orchards** (permie plantings, foraging GPS databases); active pantry packaging hub; multiple homes/sites ready to pilot local hubs.

Challenges (themes to work on)

- **Geographic spread** → decentralize via regional subgroups, sync via shared calendars/standards.
- **Cold chain & logistics** for perishables; define when refrigeration or insulated transport is required.
- **Beginner gaps & bandwidth** (post-festival volunteer limits; need simple curricula and predictable rhythms).
- **Regulatory edges** (urban livestock limits; public-market restrictions for tinctures; use PMA/co-op interfaces wisely).
- **Indoor-growing risks** (mould, spider mites) → airflow/sanitation SOPs.

30–60 Day “Quick-Win” Pilots

1. **Start up the Food Telegram group + roster:** capture contacts, regions, offers/needs; post a rolling calendar of regional foraging/processing days.
2. **Pantry cadence & hubs:** schedule the next Pantry run; confirm pilot hubs; publish pickup map & roles.
3. **Garlic-in-the-ground socials** (late Oct) + Preservation 101 (apples → dehydrate/sauce; vinegars; ferments).
4. **Livestock interest poll:** chickens first (eggs), then goats; choose pay-per-lb vs labour-offset; define welfare/processing standards.
5. **Freeze-dryer scope:** compare sizes/costs, site, access policy; meanwhile, share existing dehydrators.
6. **Indoor microgreens micro-pilot:** one basement/container site with airflow/pest SOP; track yield/cost/uptake.
7. **Youth & neighbours:** revive urban maple syrup teams; pair with school demos on soil/food security.

Simple Metrics to Learn Fast

- **Participation:** # active regional subgroups; attendees per field/processing day; # new growers onboarded.
- **Production & capture:** kg of apples/berries recovered; jars/kg preserved per event; pantry SKUs added.
- **Distribution:** Pantry order count, fill rate, # hubs, on-time pickup %, cold-chain incidents.
- **Animal Sources:** eggs/week from pilot flocks; # fish days; preserved jars produced.
- **Learning:** beginner workshop NPS; % of first-timers starting a bed/container; youth session count.

Open questions to carry forward

- **Freeze-dryer:** where to locate, access rules, booking & cost-share; which products are highest value?
- **Cold chain:** when do we rent/share refrigeration vs redesign products to be shelf-stable?
- **Livestock challenges:** species, volumes, welfare, processing partners, and transport; who stewards standards?
- **PMA ↔ public interfaces:** branding, funding partnerships, and compliance lines for food and herbal products.
- **Indoor vs outdoor mix:** what % of winter calories can indoor microgreens/sprouts realistically cover?

Risks & Mitigations

- **Volunteer bottlenecks** → rotating event leads; smaller, frequent “micro-parties”; shared checklists.
- **Quality & safety** → preservation SOPs; canning/fermentation training; pantry QA before listing.
- **Logistics failures** → hub captains, backup drivers, insulated totes; shelf-stable defaults off-season.
- **Regulatory friction** → PMA sales inside; co-op partners for public programs/funding; clear member education.