

# CENTERS + INSTITUTES

## Fowler Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit

The Fowler Center for Business as an Agent of World Benefit exists to create a world where business can prosper, human beings can flourish and nature can thrive.

The Fowler Center was established in 2009, with the timely and generous gift of Chuck and Char Fowler. Originally named the Fowler Center for Sustainable Value, the donation launched the inquiry into Business as an Agent of World Benefit initiative, started in 2002, to a new level of priority, scale, and scope as an interdisciplinary center of excellence.

The Fowler Center helps propel business success and flourishing enterprise through the belief that business is one of the most powerful and positive forces for advancing a better world. The Center challenges, at every turn, what might be called “the great trade-off illusion”—the myth that doing good is at odds with doing well. We believe that increasingly, it’s exactly the opposite. Peter F. Drucker, one of our first advisors, said that he loved the phrase “business as an agent of world benefit” because of its opportunity focus. He was clear that every business exists to create value and advance a better society. He declared that:

*“Every social and global issue of our day is a business opportunity in disguise... just waiting for the pragmatism of good business, its capacity for radical innovation and entrepreneurship and its management for results.”*

We know from the best research available that “doing good and doing well” is the most promising pathway to organizational success and significance, especially when coupled with the increasingly high expectations of stakeholders including millennials and Generation Z and the inherent interdependence of economy and nature.

The research, teaching and service mission of the Fowler Center is to be one of the world’s most powerful, science-based and inspiring organization development centers for the advancement of business success and what we call “full spectrum flourishing.”

Business as an Agent of World Benefit is about accelerating, as the new normal, the kind of full spectrum flourishing enterprise that’s about (1) people being inspired every day and bringing their best selves to work; (2) innovation arising from everywhere; and (3) realizing remarkable relationship value with stakeholders—customers, employees, supply chain partners, communities, and the biosphere—to create unprecedented, enduring business advantage.

Companies embracing the notion of “full-spectrum flourishing” as part of their business strategy have seen huge benefits to their bottom line. These findings are reported in recent publications such as *Flourishing Enterprise* (Laszlo, Brown, et al., 2014), *Dreammakers: Innovating for the Greater Good* (Hunt, 2017), and *The Quest for a Flourishing Earth is the Most Significant OD Opportunity of the 21st Century* (Cooperrider, 2017), *Quantum Leadership: New Consciousness in Business* (Laszlo, Tsao, 2019), and *The Business of Building a Better World: The Leadership Revolution that is Changing Everything* (Cooperrider, Selian, 2021).

The Fowler Center advances extraordinary business innovation and social entrepreneurship by turning the social and global issues of our day into business opportunities, much as Peter F. Drucker envisioned. The Fowler Center practices, researches and supports initiatives based on whole-system design for advancing the ‘how-to’ of flourishing enterprise, and

works with businesses, organizations, industries and economic regions to discover the power and promise of flourishing as an innovation engine for doing good and doing well. Our purpose is clear:

**A world where business can excel, human beings can flourish and nature can thrive.**

### Portfolio of activities

The Fowler Center conducts research, teaching, service and applied work to accelerate a better world, one where business can excel, all people can flourish and nature can thrive. Our strategic portfolio includes:

- a. AIM2Flourish: The search for the greatest business and society innovations in the world
- b. Powerful Learning Environments for Students: Programs for student leadership advancement and entrepreneurship
- c. Research and Applied Business as an Agent of World Benefit; such as custom design corporate development and Appreciate Inquiry summits
- d. Strategic Convening and Knowledge Alliances, such as our Global Forum Series
- e. Pioneering Scholarship

The research activities of the Fowler Center include teaching cases and PhD research, as well as books, book chapters and journal articles on appreciative inquiry, sustainable value, design and flourishing enterprise. To carry out its agenda, the Fowler Center relies in part on its Fowler Center Doctor of Management/Doctor of Business Administration Fellows, MBA Business as an Agent of World Benefit Fellows and other students of Case Western Reserve University.

The leadership of the Fowler Center is built on the vision and work of David Cooperrider, Ron Fry, Chris Laszlo and other faculty at the Weatherhead School of Management, working in close collaboration with the Fowler Center’s advisory board members and other leaders in the Case Western Reserve University community.

To learn more or to find out how you or your organization can get involved, visit the Fowler Center website or contact the Fowler Center at 216.368.2160.