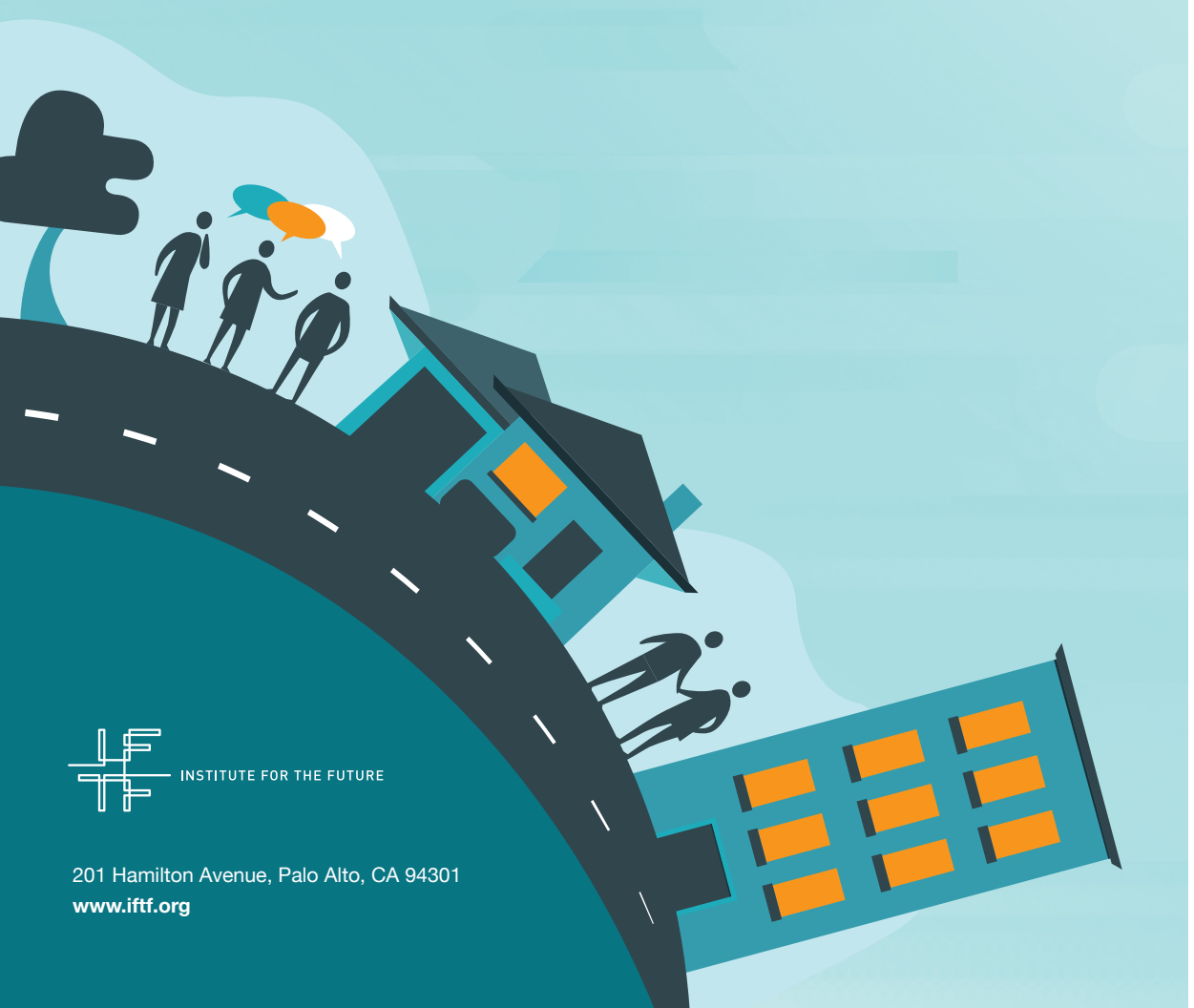# UBA
universal basic assets

A manifesto for a more equitable future

The numbers are striking. In 2010, 288 of the richest people in the world collectively owned as much as the poorest 3.5 billion. Less than a decade later, just eight people owned as much wealth as the bottom half of the world's population.

In this moment of massive wealth inequality, we urgently need to develop a new model for society to deliver both social and economic equity. The answer may be Universal Basic Assets (UBA)—a fundamental set of resources that we should strive to give everyone access to.

This map is a guide to designing this new economic model.

A framework for equity: three design directions

As rapid advances in automation, artificial intelligence, and machine learning undermine established patterns of work and sources of income for vast swaths of the population, we urgently need a new framework that delivers greater social and economic equity.

This framework must center on equalizing access to different classes of assets. As Thomas Piketty and colleagues have pointed out, in an environment where economic returns are increasingly accruing to asset holders, ex-post redistribution via taxes and transfers will not be sufficient. Solutions to economic inequality need to address more equal access to primary assets, and **three design strategies point the way:**

RETHINKING

private assets

Private assets are resources that we own individually. Housing, land, personal wealth, educational vouchers, smart tablets, and solar rooftops are all examples, but so are stocks and bonds and even savings accounts. Given the massive inequalities of the present, it's clear that we need to widen access to and distribution of private assets. Strategies range from redistribution of income via progressive taxes and a universal basic income to creating more equal access to opportunity—that is, giving people a more equitable starting point for achieving economic and social mobility via innovations like the UK's Child Trust Fund and experiments with Individual Development Accounts (IDAs) in the United States.

How can we design and manage private assets to promote individual access and initiative while avoiding concentration of wealth in the hands of a few?

REINVENTING

public assets

Public assets include resources that are collectively owned and held in the public trust, generally by governments or non-governmental organizations. They can include everything from public schools, health care, and transportation infrastructure to national parks, natural and cultural resources, and legal and social services. Today, countries that rank highest in social mobility are those with the highest levels of access to public assets. Yet, as governments everywhere struggle to mediate public and private assets, they often set up costly and counterproductive bureaucracies that undermine such access.

How can we reinvent public assets to foster innovation and mobility for everyone in the globally-connected world of the 21st century?

GROWING

open assets

Open assets are resources that are open to everyone, generally in exchange for some level of contribution to design, maintenance, and participation. In the open sector, a group of founders typically creates an initial set of conditions for creation of open assets, and the rules for access emerge through the interactions of participants. While the digital revolution has fueled the growth of the open sector with iconic successes like Wikipedia, physical experiments like [freespace] point to design principles for growing open assets in the analog world as well.

How can we create the conditions for open assets to flourish and provide sustainable value to local and global communities alike?

A manifesto for Universal Basic Assets

If we were to declare the human right to Universal Basic Assets, we could start with **eight categories of assets** that could create a more equitable world:

🏠 spaces People need spaces to live, produce, create, and commune. Some of these spaces might be private, allowing people to express their individual values and lifestyles. Others might support collective values deemed important for society as a whole, such as learning, health, and collective sustainability. Still others might bring groups of people together to articulate specific shared values, from a DIY ethic to a celebration of beauty.

We declare that humans should have equitable access to each of these kinds of spaces in both the physical and digital worlds.

💧 natural resources People need access to the basic life-supporting resources of the natural environment—air, water, sunlight, and the ecosystems of animal and plant life. Humans can't survive apart from these natural resources and thus need equitable access to them, whether as private, public, or open assets. Furthermore, the human predisposition to organize these resources to amplify their quality of life irrevocably ties human well-being to the natural ecosystem.

We declare that humans should have the inalienable right of access to life-sustaining natural resources.

🏛 infrastructure People need the tools and structures upon which human civilizations are built, from roads and waterways to power and communication grids. They need a built environment that supports not just social and economic exchanges, but physical, psychological, and spiritual participation in a complex, global society.

We declare that humans should have access to the infrastructures that enable responsible participation in a global economy and society.

💰 capital People need fungible currencies that can be traded for material, digital, and social goods. Beyond this basic financial infrastructure, they need the tools, instruments, and institutions for tracking these trades, for securing their capital resources, and for individually and collectively amplifying the value of these resources to achieve both personal and societal goals. They equally need the practical knowledge of how these financial systems work at both local and global scales.

We declare that humans should have sufficient access to a diversity of currencies and financial knowledge to participate fully in a sustainable economy.

⟳ data People need access to tools for acquiring, sharing, interpreting, and verifying information about themselves and their environment. Further, they have a fundamental right to track their personal health, wealth, and reputational data. They have a right to selectively protect the privacy of their personal and institutional data where disclosure would jeopardize their well-being.

We declare that humans should have controlling access to their personal data and open access to collective data about the systems in which they participate.

💡 know-how People need skills and knowledge to make their way in life—and to collectively manage the complex systems in which they participate. They need to understand the natural, human, computing laws that regulate these systems. In short, they need to know the "rules of the game."

We declare that humans should have access to up-to-date knowledge and training to understand and prosper in the systems that produce value in daily life.

👥 communities People need community to thrive. They need opportunities to assemble and act in accordance with shared values, identities, ideologies, and life goals. They need ways to reconcile the differences among the different communities that touch their lives. They also need to influence the systems in which these sometimes contrary communities interact.

We declare that humans should have access to basic platforms, both digital and analog, for affiliation and pursuit of collective goals in a global society.

◀)) power People need standing—economic, social, and legal. They need to be able to influence their rights in the systems that shape their lives. They need opportunities to increase their standing and impact in communities that matter to them, in organizations that employ them, and in institutions that govern them. Regardless of standing, they need a voice to speak truth to power.

We declare that humans should have access to processes for making their voices heard, their rights recognized, and all rules fairly enforced.

UBA universal basic assets

A map of the emerging horizon

Columns (top header):
- 🏠 spaces
- 💧 natural resources
- 🛣 infrastructure
- 🪙 capital
- 📊 data
- 💡 know-how
- 👥 communities
- 🔊 power

private assets
Assets that we own individually

public assets
Assets that are collectively owned and held in the public trust by governments and NGOs

open assets
Assets that are open to everyone in exchange for community participation

spaces

Landed
Affordable home loans and investment advice for local teachers
tpfs.com

Landesa
Programs to secure gender-equal land rights
landesa.org

Uganda National Land Policy
Land deeds for immigrants
redpepper.co.ug

Project for Public Spaces
A community "placemaking" approach to public spaces
pps.org

[freespace]
Network of community-operated spaces
BurningMan.org

natural resources

Chain-of-custody tracking
Programs to monitor and share earnings from natural resources
ftegi.org

Charter forests
Private management of national forests
earthobservation.com

California Data Collaborative
Collaboration to integrate data on water
thefreshwatertrust.org

Great Outdoors Lab
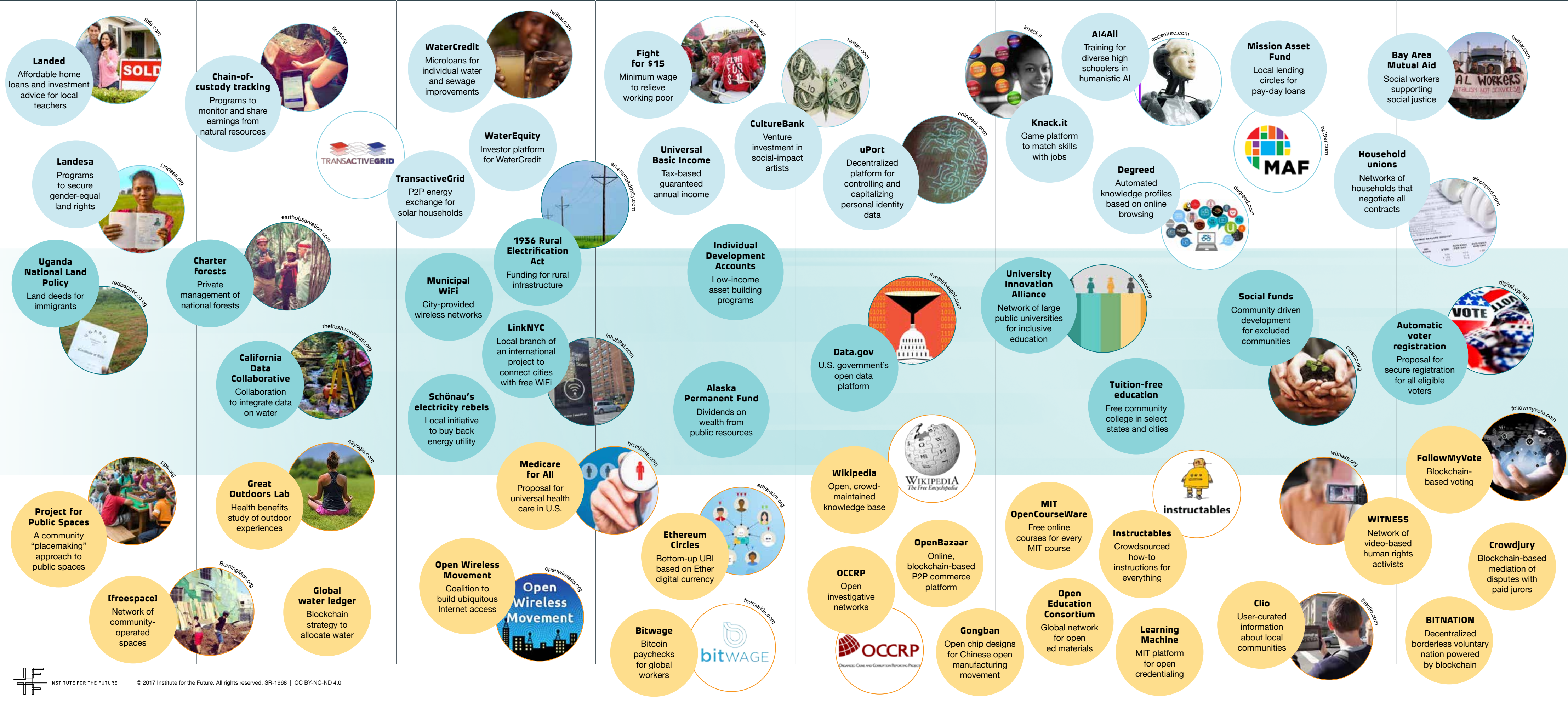Health benefits study of outdoor experiences
42yogis.com

Global water ledger
Blockchain strategy to allocate water

infrastructure

WaterCredit
Microloans for individual water and sewage improvements
twitter.com

WaterEquity
Investor platform for WaterCredit

TransactiveGrid
P2P energy exchange for solar households
TRANSACTIVEGRID

1936 Rural Electrification Act
Funding for rural infrastructure
en.elemadaily.com

Municipal WiFi
City-provided wireless networks

LinkNYC
Local branch of an international project to connect cities with free WiFi
inhabitat.com

Schönau's electricity rebels
Local initiative to buy back energy utility

Medicare for All
Proposal for universal health care in U.S.
healthline.com

Open Wireless Movement
Coalition to build ubiquitous Internet access
openwireless.org
Open Wireless Movement

capital

Fight for $15
Minimum wage to relieve working poor
scpr.org

Universal Basic Income
Tax-based guaranteed annual income

Individual Development Accounts
Low-income asset building programs

Alaska Permanent Fund
Dividends on wealth from public resources

Ethereum Circles
Bottom-up UBI based on Ether digital currency
ethereum.org

Bitwage
Bitcoin paychecks for global workers
themerkle.com
bitWAGE

data

CultureBank
Venture investment in social-impact artists
twitter.com

uPort
Decentralized platform for controlling and capitalizing personal identity data
coindesk.com

Data.gov
U.S. government's open data platform
fivethirtyeight.com

Wikipedia
Open, crowd-maintained knowledge base
WIKIPEDIA The Free Encyclopedia

OCCRP
Open investigative networks
OCCRP Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project

OpenBazaar
Online, blockchain-based P2P commerce platform

Gongban
Open chip designs for Chinese open manufacturing movement

know-how

AI4All
Training for diverse high schoolers in humanistic AI

Knack.it
Game platform to match skills with jobs
knack.it

Degreed
Automated knowledge profiles based on online browsing
accenture.com
degreed.com

University Innovation Alliance
Network of large public universities for inclusive education
theia.org

Tuition-free education
Free community college in select states and cities

MIT OpenCourseWare
Free online courses for every MIT course

Open Education Consortium
Global network for open ed materials

Instructables
Crowdsourced how-to instructions for everything
instructables

Learning Machine
MIT platform for open credentialing

communities

Mission Asset Fund
Local lending circles for pay-day loans
MAF

Social funds
Community driven development for excluded communities
classnc.org

WITNESS
Network of video-based human rights activists
witness.org

Clio
User-curated information about local communities
theclio.com

power

Bay Area Mutual Aid
Social workers supporting social justice
twitter.com

Household unions
Networks of households that negotiate all contracts
electroid.com

Automatic voter registration
Proposal for secure registration for all eligible voters
digital.vpr.net

FollowMyVote
Blockchain-based voting
followmyvote.com

Crowdjury
Blockchain-based mediation of disputes with paid jurors

BITNATION
Decentralized borderless voluntary nation powered by blockchain

How to design your own UBA system

The goal of this map is to help people everywhere jump-start their thinking about alternative models for accessing Universal Basic Assets. It shows a few of the experiments that already point the way. Now it's your turn to set your own goals and design your own models for a more equitable society.

You can use this map to:

Develop a set of UBA goals | Choose one or more categories of assets from the UBA manifesto and develop your own goal statements. Make the manifesto your own.

Design innovative UBA solutions | Choose one or more design strategies—private, public, or open—and brainstorm ways to achieve your goals using these strategies. Use the examples on the map to jump-start your thinking about your own innovations.
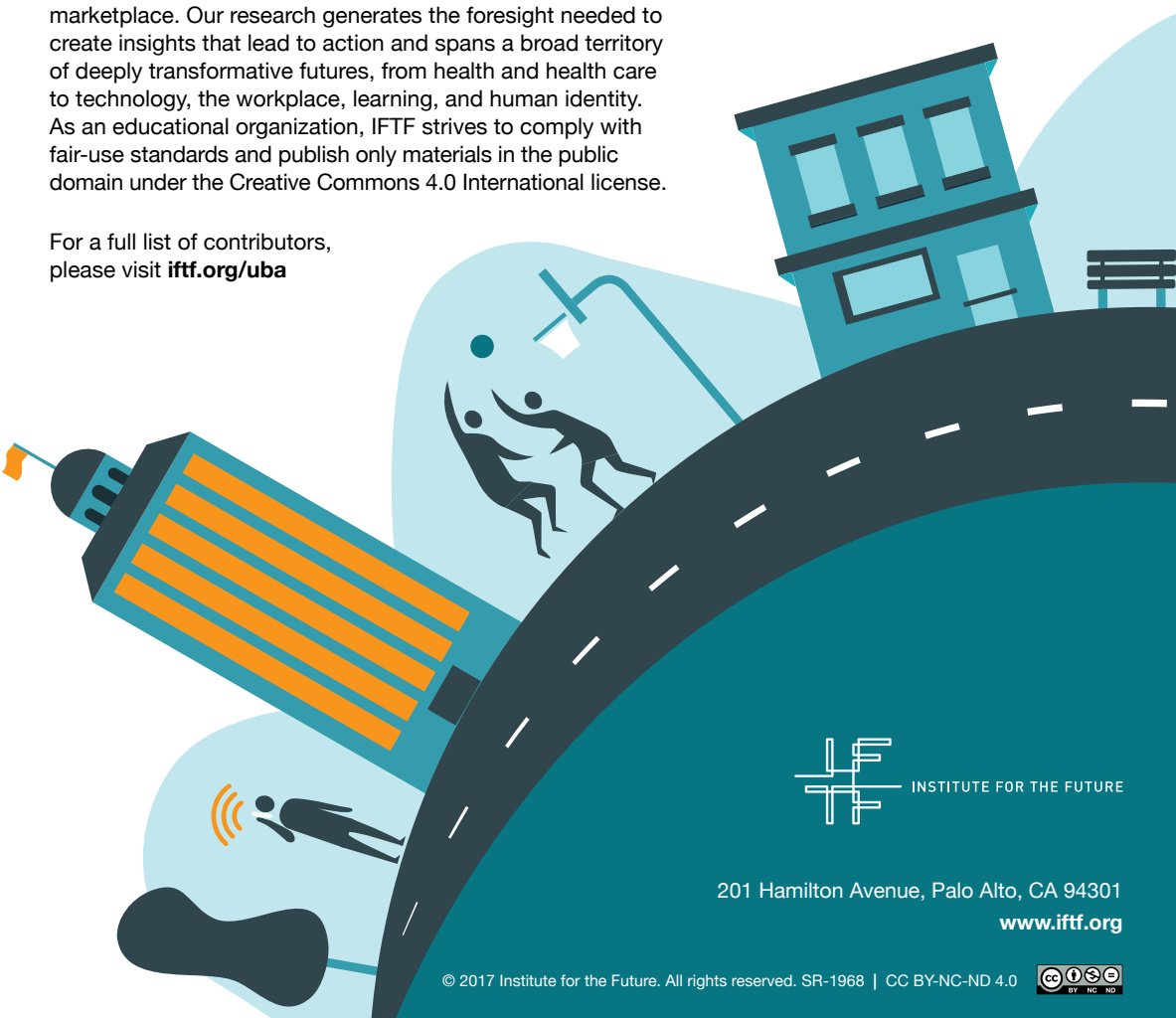
Connect the innovations to create a system | Think about the way several innovations— either yours or those on the map—might fit together to amplify one another and create a UBA system.

Tell a story of adaptation or transformation | Your system may be an adaptation of current approaches or it may transform the world's thinking about what's possible. Tell the story about the path you've chosen and where it leads.

INSTITUTE FOR THE FUTURE

Institute for the Future (IFTF) is an independent, nonprofit 501(c)(3) strategic research and educational organization celebrating nearly 50 years of forecasting experience. The core of our work is identifying emerging trends and discontinuities that will transform global society and the global marketplace. Our research generates the foresight needed to create insights that lead to action and spans a broad territory of deeply transformative futures, from health and health care to technology, the workplace, learning, and human identity. As an educational organization, IFTF strives to comply with fair-use standards and publish only materials in the public domain under the Creative Commons 4.0 International license.

For a full list of contributors, please visit **iftf.org/uba**