

THE RAYON INDEX · PATENT PENDING

Rest Works

Testing Partners Guide

A field manual for organizations and facilitators testing Rest Works with their own communities during Phase 0, Phase 1, and Phase 2 of the validation process.

Prepared for Testing Partners · Confidential pilot materials

1. Welcome, and Thank You

You are reading this because you said yes to something most organizations are not asked to do: test a tool that asks people to relive the moments that made rest necessary, in service of building infrastructure that might prevent the next person from needing to relive it.

This guide exists so you are never guessing at what to do, what to watch for, or what to send back. It is the difference between you carrying this work alone and you carrying it as part of a larger structure built to hold you.

What You Already Agreed To

As a Testing Partner, you are contributing to one of three phases:

- **Phase 0, Early Read:** a small first round, 8 to 12 people, run before the wider validation begins. Its job is to find the rough edges while the group is small enough that finding them costs little.
- **Phase 1, Prototype Validation:** running individuals or small groups through the Rest Works simulation and reporting back on usability, emotional safety, and decision logic, at the fuller scale Phase 0 confirms the simulation is ready for.
- **Phase 2, Focus Group and Meaning-Making:** convening a group of 8 to 10 people for a facilitated conversation that moves past usability into interpretation, going beyond what the system measures into what it means.

Your coordinator Tanesha Ferguson will confirm which phase, or phases, your site is participating in. If you have any questions, feel free to contact tanesha@theblackdonorsproject.org.

If your site is part of Phase 0

You were chosen deliberately, not as a smaller version of Phase 1. Phase 0 exists to surface confusion, friction, and unsafe moments while the group is still small. A session that finds a real problem is doing exactly what it is supposed to do. There is no expectation that the simulation arrives at your site already finished.

A note on naming

You may see this program referred to as Rest Works in some materials and Testing Rest in others. Rest Works is the working name for the platform and simulation itself. Testing Rest is the name used on some public-facing materials during this beta period. Both refer to the same program. This guide uses Rest Works throughout.

2. What Rest Works Actually Is

Rest Works is a decision simulation, not a survey. People move through a branching story, written in close second person, that places them inside a real rest request from one of two seats: the person asking for rest, or the leader responding to the request.

There is no quiz screen and no dashboard sitting in front of the person while they play. The narrative comes first. A scenario opens, the person reads what is happening, and then they choose how to

respond from a short list of real options. What happens next, the consequence, the ripple effects, the next scenario, all depend on what they chose.

Underneath the story, eight quiet meters move with every choice: things like Collapse Risk, Harm, Coverage, Culture, Relationship Stewardship, and Nervous System Regulation. The person testing it does not see a scorecard while they play. They see a story responding to them.

At the end of a session, those accumulated choices resolve into two things: a Restoration Readiness Score for leadership sessions, and a set of generated artifacts, a draft policy, a suggested ritual, sequenced next steps, all built from the specific decisions that specific person made.

Why this matters for your role

Because the experience is narrative and emotional before it is anything else, your job as a Testing Partner is not to evaluate features. It is to notice what happens in the room, and in the body, while someone is inside the story. That is the data this phase actually needs.

3. Your Role as a Testing Partner

Testing Partners sit between the research design and the people actually living the questions Rest Works is asking. You are not running a focus group on a finished product. You are helping decide what the product becomes.

What You Are Responsible For

- Recruiting or identifying participants who match the profile your coordinator confirmed with you
- Creating a setting where participants feel safe enough to be honest, including about discomfort or confusion
- Running the session according to the cohort structure assigned to your site (see Section 4)
- Observing and logging what you see, without editing it for what you think the team wants to hear
- Returning your materials by the agreed deadline so your site's data can be included in that phase's findings

What You Are Not Responsible For

- Fixing the simulation's logic in the moment. If something breaks or confuses someone, note it, do not work around it silently
- Interpreting the meaning of what participants share. That is Phase 2 work, done collectively, not a judgment call for you to make alone
- Convincing anyone that rest is good for them. Participants who are skeptical, resistant, or numb to the topic are valuable data, not a recruiting failure

Testing Partners serve as facilitators and co-designers of the Testing Rest experience. Your role extends beyond delivering the simulation. You are helping us understand how the methodology functions in practice and how it can better support the people and organizations who will use it.

Throughout the testing process, we invite you to observe both the participant experience and the facilitation experience. We are interested in what worked, what felt unclear, where participants needed additional support, and where opportunities exist to strengthen the methodology.

Your observations become part of our Human-Centered Design process. Together, we will examine the feedback, identify patterns, and develop recommendations for improving the simulation, facilitation guide, participant resources, reports, and implementation process.

We will also compare facilitator recommendations with AI-generated recommendations to understand where human experience and machine analysis arrive at similar conclusions, where they differ, and what those differences reveal. The goal is to strengthen Testing Rest through responsible technology while ensuring that lived experience, facilitation practice, and community knowledge continue to guide the evolution of the methodology.

4. Which Cohort You're Running

If your site is part of Phase 0, you are running Guided Testing only. Phase 0 is small and supported on purpose, every session has a facilitator present, so nothing surfaces for the first time unobserved. Independent Testing is introduced once Phase 0 confirms the simulation is ready for it.

Phase 1 splits into two testing structures. Your coordinator will tell you which one your site is hosting. Some sites run both, with different participants in each.

Cohort A — Guided Testing

You, or a facilitator from your site, sit with the participant while they move through the simulation. You are present but you do not direct their choices.

While guiding, you are watching for four things specifically:

- **Emotional responses:** where does the participant pause, tense up, laugh, go quiet, or say something out loud unprompted?
- **Confusion points:** where do they ask what something means, reread a screen, or pick an option and then say “wait, what does that do?”
- **Language accessibility:** does the wording land the way it was intended, or does it need translation, simplification, or cultural adjustment for your community?
- **Permission-seeking:** does the participant turn to you and ask which answer they should pick, rather than just choosing? That moment is itself a finding.

Cohort B — Independent Testing

The participant moves through the simulation on their own, with no facilitator present during the session. You set them up, then step back.

Independent testing is measuring something Guided Testing cannot:

- Whether the onboarding instructions are clear enough to stand on their own
- Whether people actually finish, and where they tend to stop if they do not
- What people assume about the product when no one is there to correct them

- How people behave when they believe no one is watching

A practical note on Independent Testing

Resist the urge to check in partway through, even if you are worried. If a participant reaches out to you mid-session with a real concern, respond with care first and log the interruption afterward. Protecting the person always outranks protecting the data.

5. Before You Begin: The Rules You Are Holding

Rest Works is being built under a specific set of commitments called the Healing-Centered Design Rules. As a Testing Partner, you are the one in the room enforcing them, even when the simulation itself is still being refined to meet them.

Design Rule	What This Means for You in the Room
No user leaves without actionable options.	If a session ends and a participant feels stuck or hopeless, that is a product finding to report, not something for you to smooth over with reassurance alone.
Reflection must lead to redesign.	When a participant names what is wrong, the goal is to capture it as a design input, not just as a feeling to be heard and released.
Users can pause, skip, or return.	Never frame the simulation as something a participant has to push through. If they want to stop, that is a valid ending, not a dropout.
No permanent labeling.	Avoid language, even informally in the room, that tells someone what kind of person their choices make them. The simulation should never sound like a diagnosis.
Rest is framed as infrastructure, not reward.	If a participant treats rest as something they have to earn through suffering first, that framing is worth noting, not correcting in the moment.

Emotional Safety Is the First Outcome

Before you measure anything else, ask yourself whether the person in front of you left the room steadier than they arrived, or more destabilized. If it is the latter, that is the most important thing you report, more important than completion rate or feature feedback.

If a participant becomes visibly distressed, your first responsibility is the person, not the data. Pause the session. Ground them. If your site has an internal care protocol, use it. If you need outside support, your coordinator can connect you with the advisory council (see Section 9).

6. Running a Session, Step by Step

Setup

- Confirm the participant fits the profile your coordinator assigned (role, sector, burnout history, generation)
- Explain, in plain language, what they are about to do and that there are no right answers being scored
- Confirm consent for their responses to be used in aggregate, anonymized reporting
- If Guided Testing, position yourself so you can observe without hovering over their shoulder

During the Session

- Let silences sit. A long pause before a choice is information, not a problem to fill
- If they ask you a direct question about what to choose, redirect gently: “There is no right answer here, choose what feels true to you.”
- Note timestamps or rough moments where something shifted, you do not need exact wording, just enough to reconstruct it later
- If a curveball or adaptive scenario triggers, that is the system responding to their accumulated choices, not a glitch. Note it, but do not explain it away

Immediately After

- Give the participant a moment before asking anything. Let them close the experience on their own terms first
- Ask one open question before any structured debrief: “What is still sitting with you?”
- Complete your observation log within 24 hours, while details are still fresh
- If anything felt unsafe, confusing, or unresolved, flag it to your coordinator the same day rather than waiting for the batch report

7. What to Send Back

Phase 1 produces four outputs across all Testing Partners. Your individual logs feed directly into these. You are not expected to produce polished analysis, just accurate, honest raw material.

Output	What It Captures
Product Friction Map	Where participants paused, got confused, asked for help, or disengaged. Specific moments, not general impressions.
Completion Dashboard	Whether the participant finished, and if not, where they stopped and why, if known.

Emotional Safety Report	Any sign of distress, destabilization, or harm, and how it was handled. This output exists to protect future participants, not to flag you for doing something wrong.
Logic Revision Recommendations	Anywhere the simulation's outcomes felt inconsistent with the choice made, or where an identity or role seemed to get a worse pathway for no clear reason.

If your site is part of Phase 0

You are feeding the same four outputs, at a faster turnaround. Because the group is small, your coordinator may ask for your log right after each session rather than in a single batch, so findings can be addressed before the next person sits down.

Your Observation Log

For each session, your log should include at minimum:

- Participant profile (role, sector, generation band) without identifying details
- Cohort type (Guided or Independent)
- Completion status, and the scenario reached if incomplete
- Notable confusion points, with the scenario or screen where they occurred
- Notable emotional responses, described plainly rather than interpreted
- Any moment the participant sought permission rather than choosing independently
- Anything that felt unsafe, unclear, or inconsistent with the Healing-Centered Design Rules

Your coordinator will provide the current log template and submission deadline for your site's cohort window.

8. If Your Site Is Also Hosting a Focus Group

Phase 2 moves past usability into meaning-making. If your site has been asked to convene a focus group, you are holding a different kind of conversation than the one-on-one sessions in Phase 1.

What Phase 2 Is Listening For

- What felt generative, not just what felt difficult
- Where the product assumed deficit rather than capacity
- What moments produced a sense of possibility
- Which decisions felt constrained, as though the real choice was not actually available
- Whether the system asked people to revisit harm without offering any way to change the conditions that caused it

- What would make participating feel regenerative rather than extractive

These questions are intentionally open. Your job as host is to protect the openness, not to steer the group toward conclusions the design team already expects to hear.

Group Composition

Focus groups run 8 to 10 participants and intentionally overlap with Phase 1 testers while bringing in new voices. Your coordinator will confirm which population your site's group represents, drawn from organizational leadership, artists and cultural workers, healthcare professionals, construction and labor workers, philanthropic funders, facilitators and coaches, emerging professionals under 35, or a cross-sector mixed group.

Outputs from this track

Focus group conversations feed four things: Healing Indicators, a Care Threshold Index, an updated Facilitation Guide, and a set of Product Design Priorities. Your detailed notes and any direct quotes participants consent to sharing are what make these outputs real rather than abstract.

9. Timeline at a Glance

Phase	What It Involves
Phase 0: Early Read <i>January 2027</i>	8 to 12 participants, Guided Testing only. Finds confusion points, language issues, and unsafe moments before the wider group encounters them.
Phase 1: Prototype Validation <i>February–April</i>	60 pilot participants across Guided and Independent cohorts, once Phase 0 confirms the simulation is ready for that scale. Outputs due before Phase 2 design begins.
Analysis Break <i>Late April</i>	Analyze findings and revise prototype.
Phase 2: Focus Groups <i>May–June</i>	8 groups of 8 to 10 participants, intentionally overlapping with Phase 1 testers.
Revisions <i>July</i>	Update scenarios and decision logic.
Phase 3: Logic Stress Testing <i>August–October</i>	Findings from Phases 0, 1, and 2 are used to revise decision logic, scenario fairness, and language before broader release.
Phase 4: Economic Mobility and Licensing <i>November–December 2027</i>	Platform licensing, facilitator certification, and broader sector expansion begin once validation is complete.

Your coordinator will confirm the specific dates for your site. This guide will be updated as Phase 0 findings shape Phase 1, and as Phase 1 findings shape Phase 2 and Phase 3 design.

10. Confidentiality, Care, and Advisory Support

Confidentiality

Participant data is reported in aggregate and anonymized form. Do not include names, identifying details, or direct quotes in your logs unless a participant has explicitly consented to attribution for that specific quote. When in doubt, anonymize.

If You Need Support

Hosting this work can surface things for you, too. If a session brings up something you need to process, or if you are unsure how to handle a moment that came up in the room, you are not expected to carry that alone.

An intergenerational advisory council walks alongside this work, offering political clarity and historical grounding as participants and partners navigate internal change. Confirmed advisors include:

- **Dr. Marguerite Hinrichs, EdD** (Alabama) — Executive Director of the Coleman Center for the Arts and Critical Race Theory scholar focused on Southern cultural infrastructure
- **Tayyib Smith** (Philadelphia) — Co-founder of Little Giant Creative and Meta Global; Place Lab Fellow and collaborator with Theaster Gates on ethical redevelopment models
- **Jennifer Njuguna** (Oakland/New York) — Co-CEO of Common Future and attorney-strategist advancing equitable community economies

Your coordinator can connect you with the advisory council for guidance specific to your site or community context.

Why Your Site's Participation Builds More Than This Product

Testing Rest builds power by placing cultural workers at the center of structural redesign. Learning happens across organizational lines through a cohort structure where participants share what is working, what is breaking, and what is shifting. Each organization documents and presents how it is embedding rest into governance, whether through board mandates, calendar restructuring, or budget triggers.

These exchanges accelerate adoption and deepen accountability. Participants return to their own institutions with language and tools that were tested by peers, not consultants. That is the shared power this phase is building, and your site is part of how it gets built.

Building the Testing Rest Ecosystem

Testing Partners are helping shape more than a pilot. Together, we are building an implementation ecosystem that can help mission-driven organizations create practical pathways toward rest.

Everything we learn during this phase matters. Your experiences, observations, and feedback will strengthen the methodology, refine the scenarios, improve facilitation, shape implementation resources, and inform

how organizations use Testing Rest in their own communities. Every insight helps move the work from concept to practice.

Testing Rest is also being designed to sustain itself. Too many promising ideas lose momentum when grant funding ends or when the work depends on one person to carry it. An earned-income implementation model creates another path forward.

Rather than relying exclusively on institutional funding, the methodology is designed to create opportunities for organizations and practitioners to generate earned income through licensing, facilitation, implementation support, and organizational learning while expanding access to practical pathways toward rest.

As a Testing Partner, you are helping build that future. Your participation is shaping the pathways, practices, and infrastructure that will allow Testing Rest to grow with integrity, remain accountable to the communities that informed it, and support organizations seeking lasting approaches to rest.

Thank You

Thank you for becoming a Testing Partner.

Your willingness to share your time, experience, questions, and perspective is helping shape more than a research project. Together, we are exploring what it takes for mission-driven organizations to move from conversations about burnout toward practical pathways that support rest, continuity, and shared responsibility.

Testing Rest exists because people have been willing to tell the truth about their experiences, imagine new possibilities, and help build something larger than any one organization could create alone.

Thank you for your trust, your generosity, and your partnership. Every conversation, observation, and reflection strengthens this work and brings us closer to building practical pathways that allow people and organizations to experience rest while sustaining the missions they care deeply about.

We are grateful to have you as part of this journey.

With gratitude,

Jeri Rayon

Founder, The Black Donors Project

Creator, Testing Rest