



# **A New Approach to Collaborative System Change**

Using Artistic Experiences to Facilitate  
Sustainable Community Development

May 2, 2016 9:30am – 11:30am

Session led by:

Richard Evans, President, EmcArts

*The world doesn't change one person at a time. It changes as networks of relationships form among people who discover they share a common cause and vision of what is possible.*

*Rather than worry about critical mass, our work is to foster critical connections.*

- Meg Wheatley

- Background to our Work
- Identifying Complex Community Challenges
- Design of the EmcArts Innovation Labs
- *Visual Explorer*
- Q & A



EmcArts

EmcArts works alongside people, organizations, and communities as they take on their most complex challenges.

Our practice is deeply influenced by artistic processes, which we believe have a unique power to unlock entrenched attitudes and open up new ways of seeing.

## National Innovation Labs in the Arts

- ✧ Performing Arts/Museums (*42 organizations*)
- ✧ Arts Development Agencies (*14 agencies*)

## New Pathways for the Arts

- ✧ *Multiple cities across the US and Canada (250+ groups)*

## Arts Leaders as Cultural Innovators

- ✧ *Individual adaptive leadership development (Arizona, DC, Rhode Island, New York City)*

## Community Innovation Labs

- ✧ *Integrating the arts into rigorous processes of local system change (2 pilots, 2 more in 2016)*

Social Innovation Labs

Creative Placemaking

# Background

## Social Innovation Labs

*“Labs confront complex, messy, and non-linear challenges that transcend the interests of a single institution or sector.”*

*- LabCraft*



*“Labs are social,  
experimental,  
and systemic.”*



**Sustainable Food Lab** – A global effort to transform our food system

**E-Lab** – Exploring ways to reimagine our energy grid

# Creative Placemaking

In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities.

- Markusen study, 2010



Local Initiatives Support Corporation  
*Helping neighbors build communities*



The set of practices in which art and culture work intentionally to help to transform a place – ArtPlace America

For our purposes we use creative placemaking to refer simply to the deliberate integration of arts and culture in [community] revitalization work – Kresge Foundation

Striving to make places more livable with enhanced quality of life, increased creative activity, a distinct sense of place, and vibrant local economies that together capitalize on their existing assets – National Endowment for the Arts Our Town

*Community efforts to address problematic situations will be deeper + more sustainable if:*

- Artists, artistic practices and cultural organizations are fully integrated into a multi-stakeholder change effort
- The process framework is rigorous, balances control and emergence, and builds on existing local capacities

# Why arts-integrated Labs?

Bringing artistic practice and experiential learning to the work of system transformation can:

- Engage hearts and hands, as well as minds
- Introduce metaphorical thinking
- Use narrative to counterpoint traditional data
- Bring diverse groups into meaningful exchange with each other
- Help synthesize complex content into meaning
- Reveal connections that link disparate interests

# Program rationale

- Inequities are increasing, views are increasingly polarized, and most citizens feel excluded from decision-making
- Traditional planning is failing us: in a world that is increasingly complex, where the future is emergent not predictable, we need new approaches



# Program rationale



Yet, **systems *can* change** for the better if we bring together unusual suspects, unfreeze the status quo, and uncover mutual interests

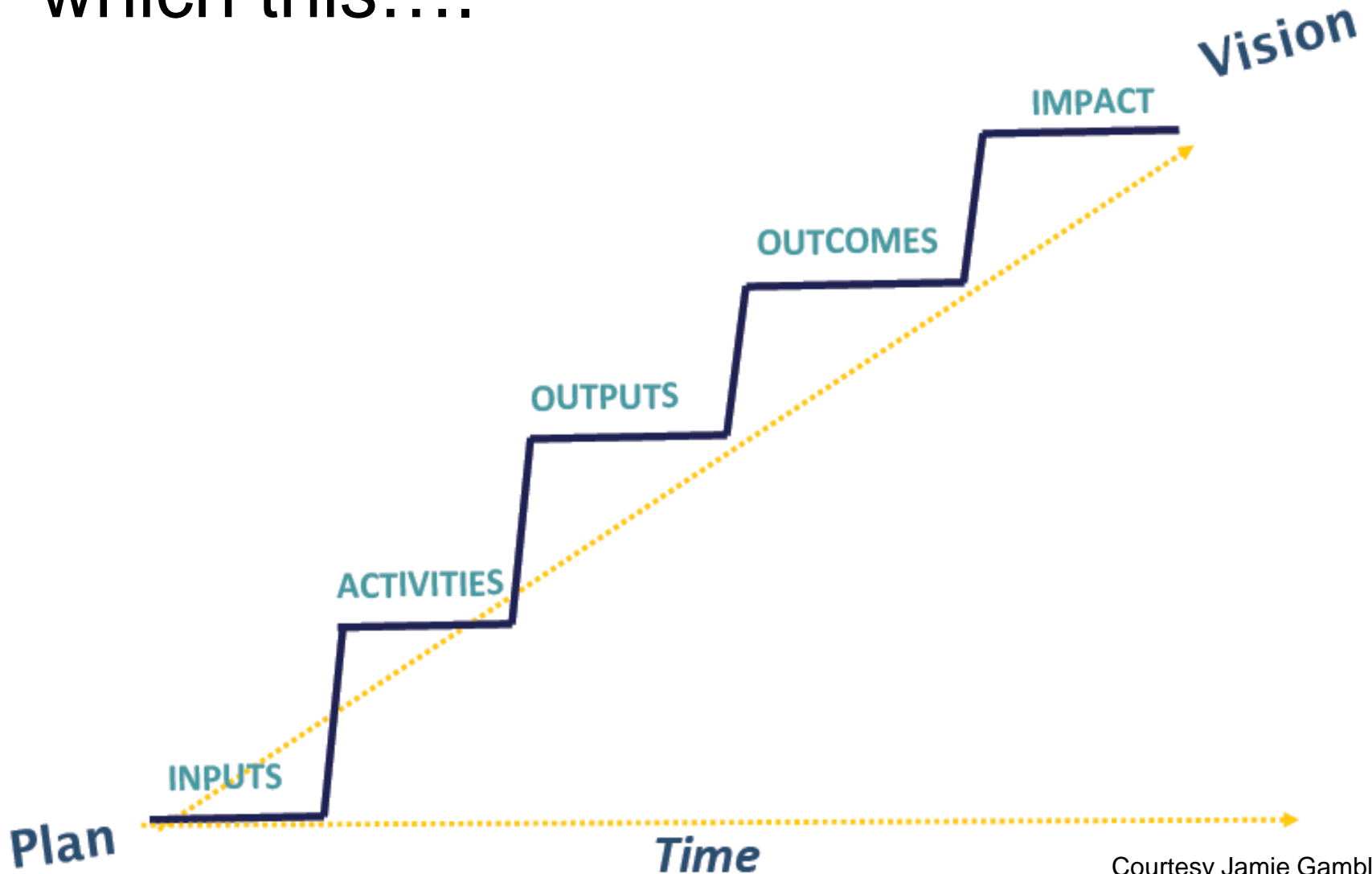
In order to do this, we've got to harness the **unique power of artists, artistic practice, and cultural organizations** to enable new ways of seeing and knowing

All this, in combination with **the deep experience of EmcArts** leading change processes over extended periods of time, is what could make this a vital new approach

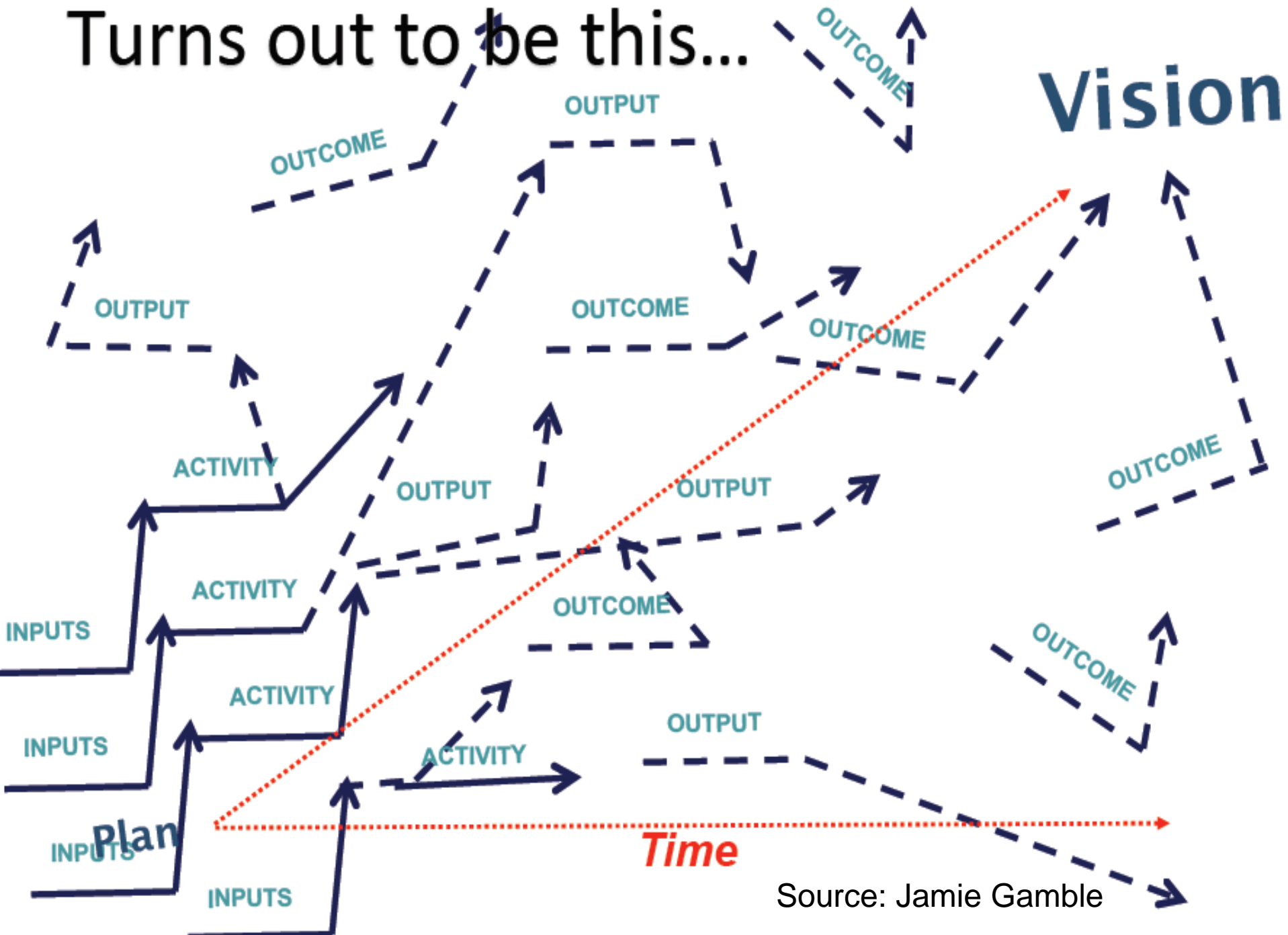
# Responding to Challenges in Different Contexts



Complex situations are ones in which this....



# Turns out to be this...



Source: Jamie Gamble





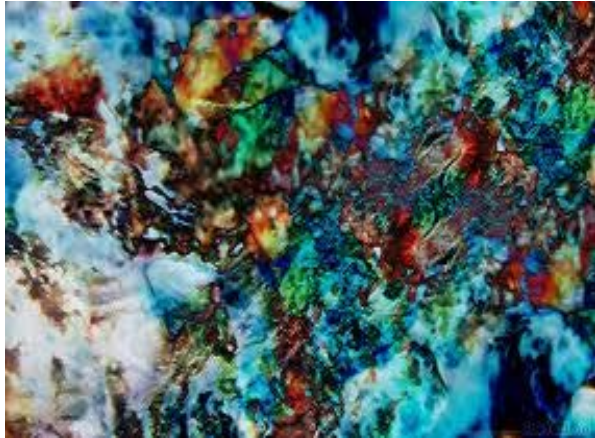
# Complex



# Complicated



*disorder*

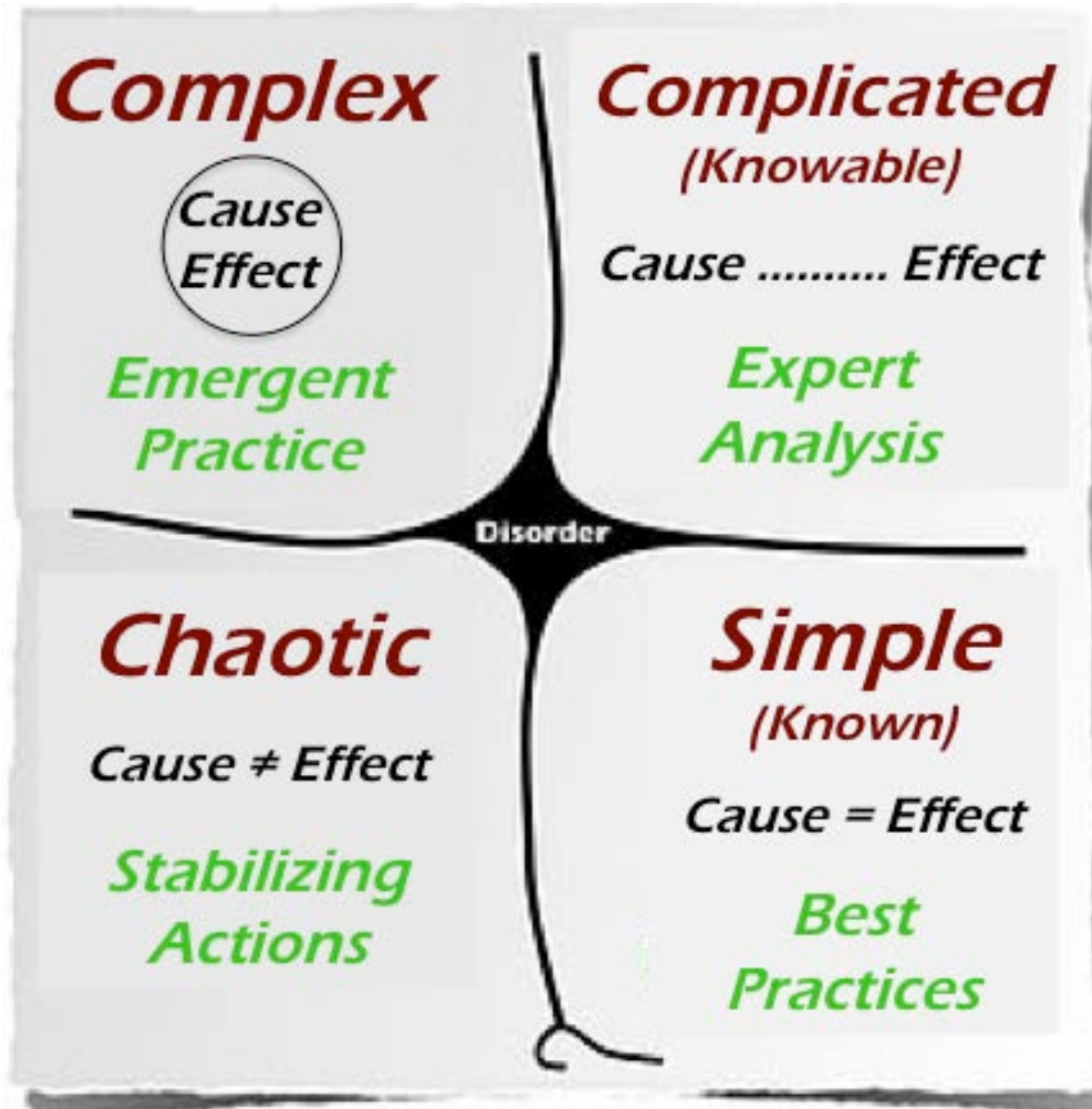


# Chaotic



# Simple

# The Cynefin Framework



Source: Dave Snowden + Cognitive Edge

# Complex

To establish a significant role for alternative energy sources

# Complicated

To maintain an effective local public transportation system

*disorder*

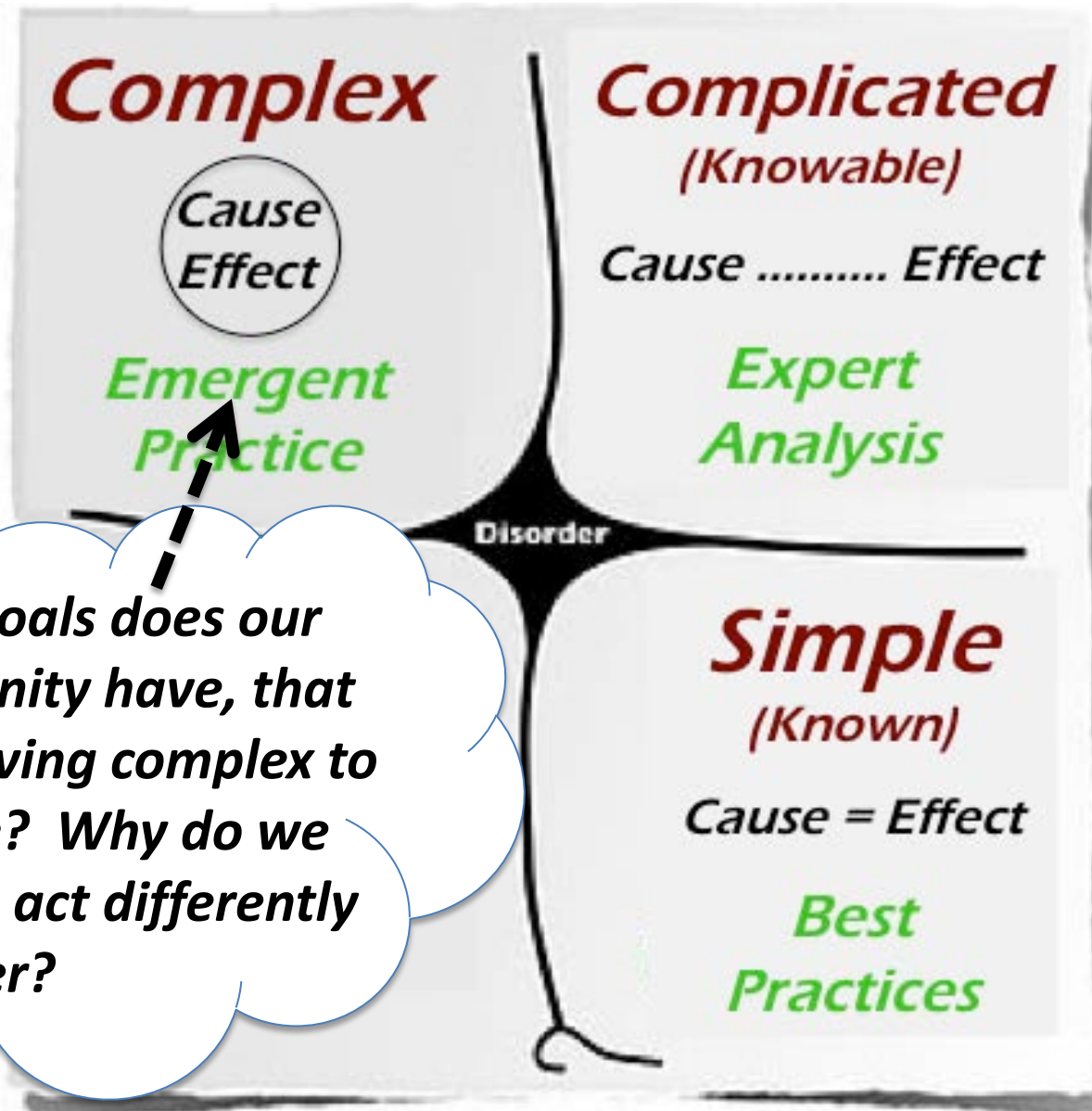
To respond to a significant weather incident

To efficiently collect and dispose of garbage

# Chaotic

# Simple

# The Cynefin Framework



*What goals does our community have, that are proving complex to achieve? Why do we need to act differently together?*





Community Innovation Labs:  
**INTRODUCING THE  
FRAMEWORK**

# Where are these Labs useful?

A *Lab* is most useful in places where:

- **There is a problematic situation that is complex**  
– requires systemic approach and involvement of multiple sectors and perspectives
- The problem has **resisted traditional planning** approaches
- There is **no clear accountability** for solving the problem
- **Many stakeholders are needed** to develop solutions and carry out new strategies

# Design Principle #1



**WEAVING NETWORKS  
ACROSS BOUNDARIES**

# Design Principle #2



SLOWING DOWN  
TO SEE THE SYSTEM

# Design Principle #3



LETTING GO OF  
LINEAR PLANNING

# Design Principle #4



HARVESTING  
ARTISTIC PRACTICES

# Full Lab Framework - Overview

CO-

THE LAB WITH LOCAL  
STAKEHOLDERS

DESIGN

ENGAGE

LOCAL NETWORKS/HEAR  
STORIES

UNFREE

THE STATUS QUO IN THE  
SYSTEM

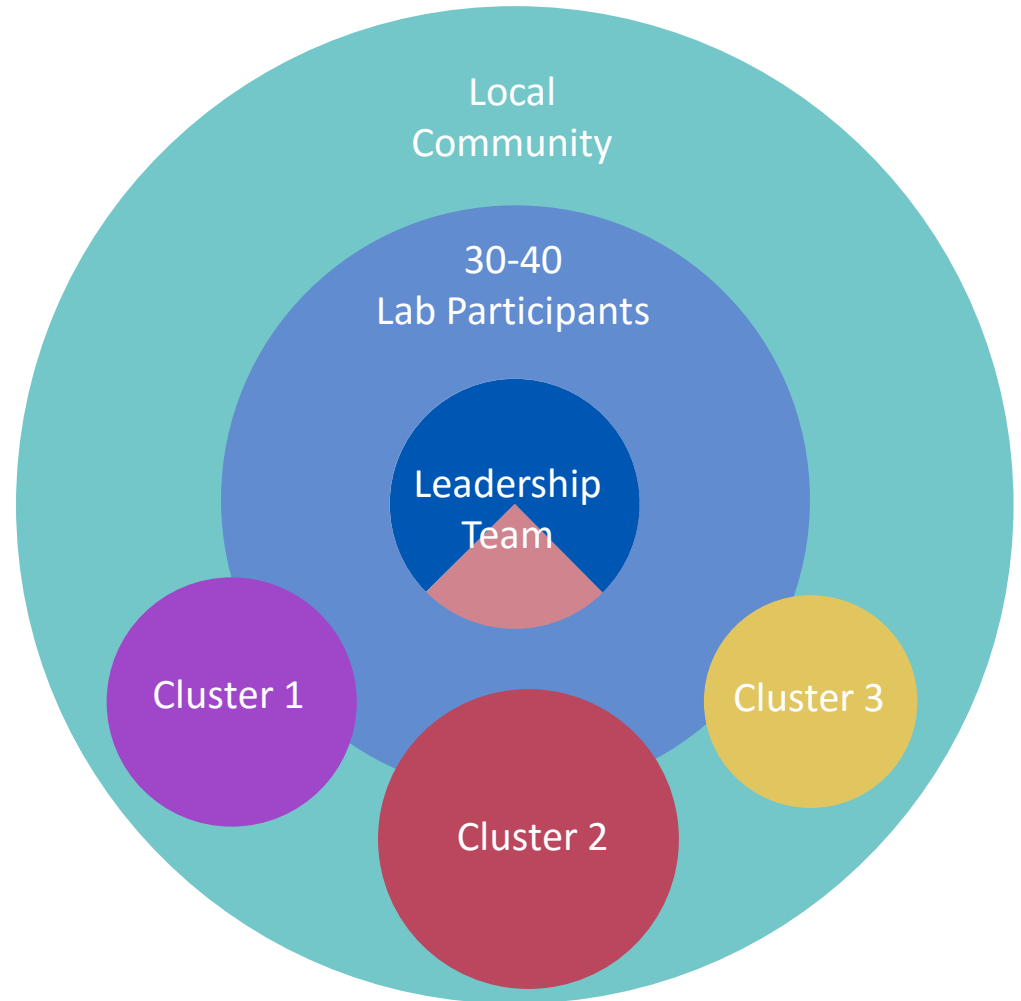
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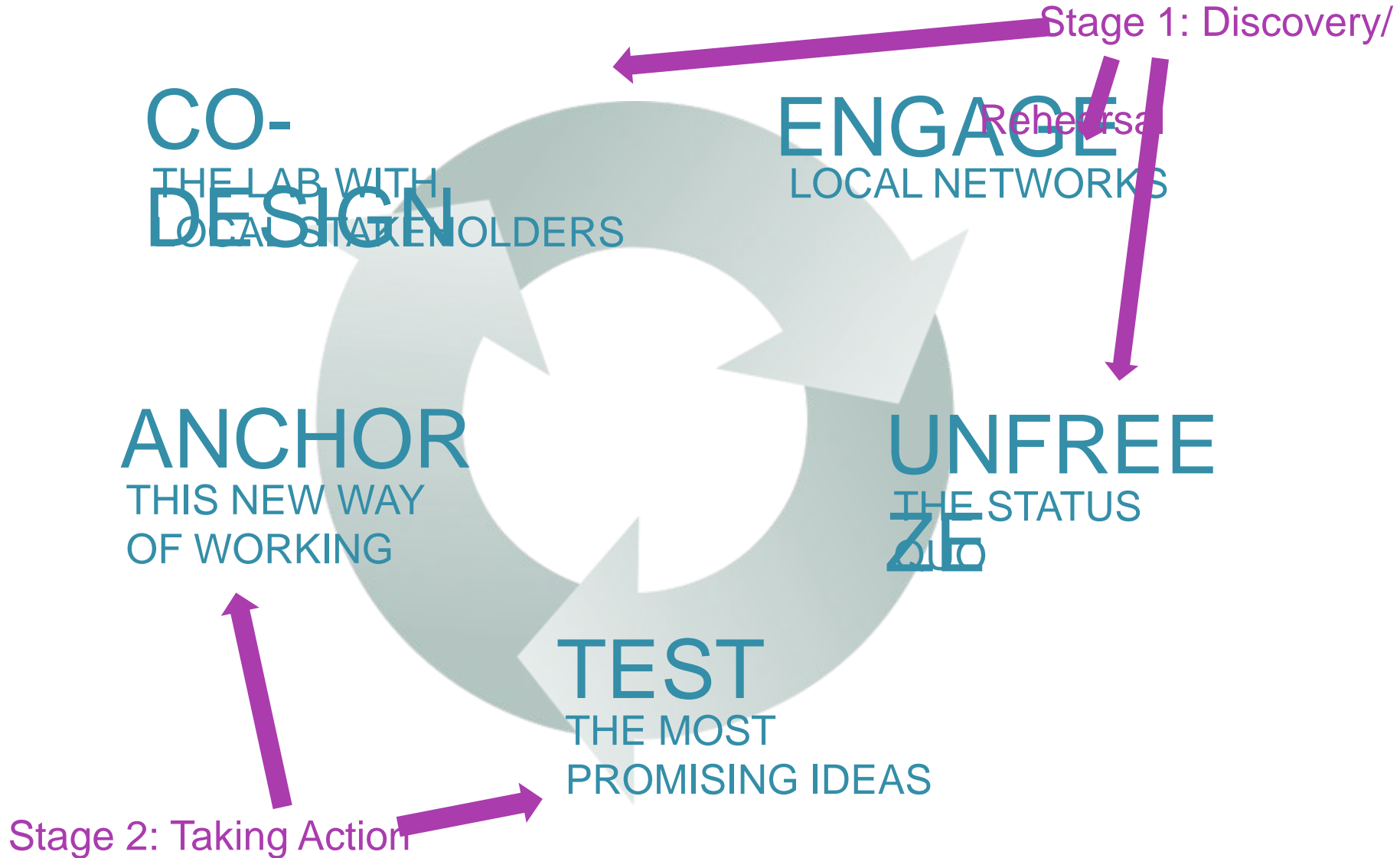
THE MOST PROMISING IDEAS

ANCHOR

THIS NEW WAY OF  
WORKING



# Full Lab Framework - Overview





**Each Community Innovation Lab is a systemic intervention** designed to strengthen the capacity of a local community to address complex challenges using the arts

Phase 1: Initiating a Lab

Phase 2: Unfreezing the Status Quo

Phase 3

PHASE	<b>Preparation and co-design</b>	<b>Community research + data collection</b>	<b>Making meaning + finding leverage</b>	<b>Promoting alignment</b>	<b>Accelerating innovation</b>
Why? PURPOSE	To plot out the phases, identify sets of participants	To gather many perspectives on how things work now, hear non-dominant narratives	To develop a shared systems sensibility + literacy, develop + strengthen networks, build trust and shared perspectives, explore the role of the arts in systems change	To open channels of communication, foster greater alignment of local policies to goals of Lab, encourage leaders to actively support emerging initiatives	To facilitate the full development of emerging arts-based system interventions, support “cluster” prototyping
What? ACTIVITIES	Half-day meetings	Interviews, small group gatherings	Series of 2-day intensive workshops and small experiments	Series of 2-hour convenings	Facilitated meetings of innovation teams, prototyping
Who? PARTICIPANTS	Original Conveners 10-12 recruited Champions	Residents, plus some system influencers	30-40 system influencers and change agents	Titular authorities, policy-makers, established leaders, change agents	Cross-organizational, cross-sector change agents working in innovation teams
When? SCHEDULE	Months 1 - 3	Months 3 - 8	Months 7 - 10	Months 9 – 14 (overlapping)	Months 11 - 15

# System Change Interventions

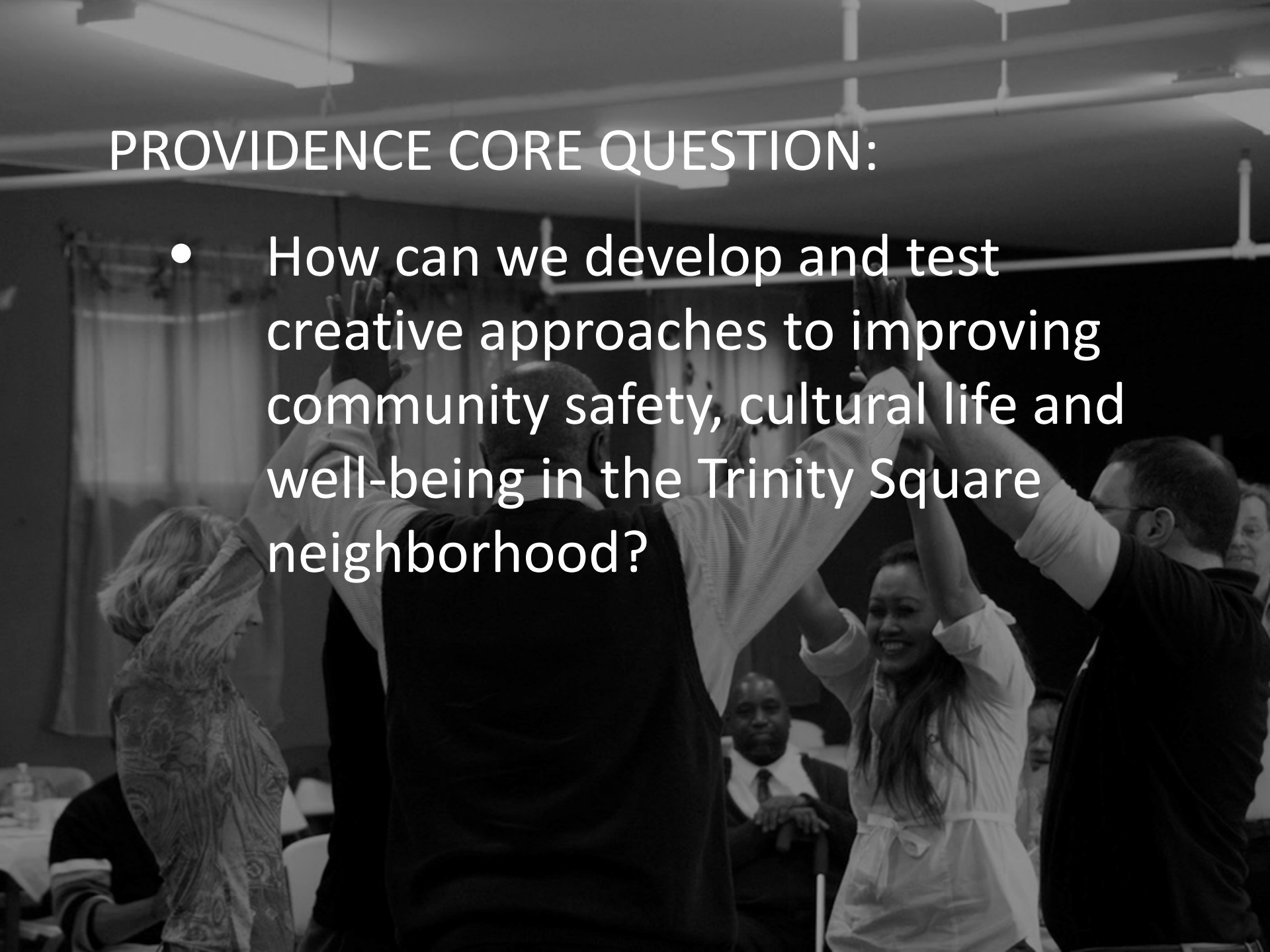
- 1. Change the paradigm:** Creating space to ask big questions about about the mindset, purpose and goals of the system
- 2. Change the ‘regime’:** Work with powerful players shaping the status quo to intentionally operate in new ways that reinforce the new dynamics
- 3. Foster the innovators:** Identify and amplify existing “seeds” (small existing initiatives) that seem to be aligned with the new system goals
- 4. Introduce new initiatives and structures:** Designed to be in alignment with the new system goals



Trinity Square in  
PROVIDENCE, RI

## PROVIDENCE CORE QUESTION:

- How can we develop and test creative approaches to improving community safety, cultural life and well-being in the Trinity Square neighborhood?





Three System Stories

1. Fixes that Backfire
2. Shifting the Burden
3. Success to the S...

WINSTON-SALEM, NC



## WINSTON-SALEM CORE QUESTIONS:

- How can we create a more equitable and abundant Winston-Salem?
- How can we move systems of race, class and power to do so?
- How can we, as a community, build enough trust to enable transformative change to happen?

# Winston-Salem System Interventions

1. Develop **arts-based forums** for our community to share ideas, information, experiences, and assumptions about race, class and power for the purpose of personal and collective learning.
2. Build **radical new structures of mutual support** for entrepreneurs and small business owners who have been traditionally excluded from access to capital.
3. Find inventive **new ways to integrate and simplify the experience of accessing social services**, focusing on a personal and holistic approach.
4. Activate a **network of unusual community partners to accelerate work towards equity in public education**, advancing issues of school segregation, funding disparity, biased discipline, culturally relevant curriculum, and staff diversity.

# #2 - An Inclusive Economy: Strategy



1. We will research the size and characteristics of our target population, and provide business education and training that is relevant and organized around their needs
2. We will change the flow of information about services and opportunities to bring our potential beneficiaries much more fully into the swim
3. We will connect and influence the major clusters of players in the system (service providers, lenders and alliances) in ways that disturb and change current dynamics



# THE ICEBERG

A Tool for Guiding Systemic Thinking

## LEVERAGE



### EVENTS

*What happened?  
Newspaper headlines*

**React**

### PATTERNS/TRENDS

*What trends have there been over time?  
What patterns lie below the events we see?*

**Anticipate**

### UNDERLYING STRUCTURES

*What might explain these events/patterns?  
What rules, policies, norms, values,  
pressures, power dynamics are influencing the patterns?*

**Design**

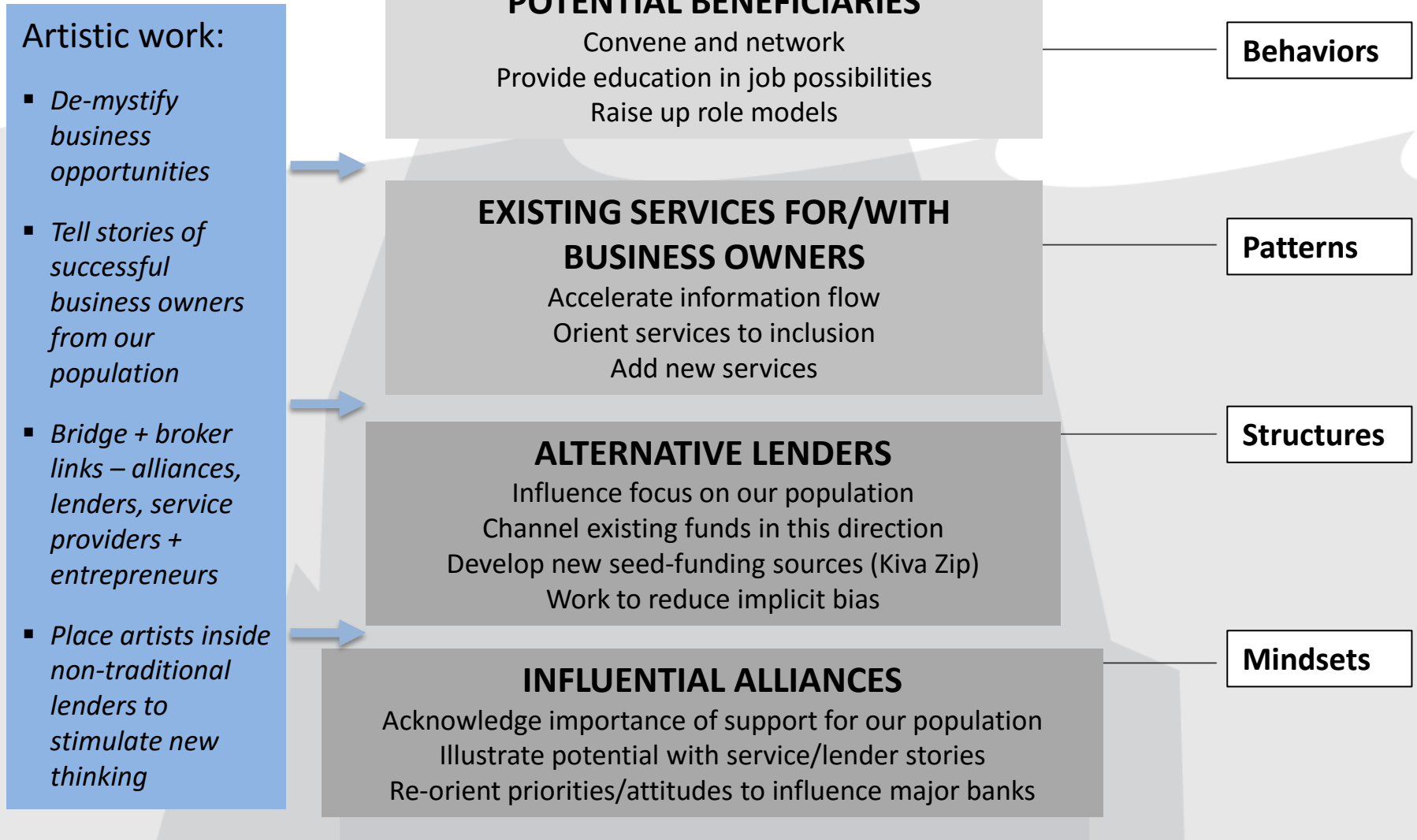
### MENTAL MODELS

*What deeply held beliefs and assumptions (whether conscious  
or unconscious) are driving behavior?*

**Transform**

# AN INCLUSIVE ECONOMY in Winston-Salem:

Emerging Systemic Strategy, with artistic work linking levels



# Intended Lab Outcomes



- A **deeply connected network** of participants who have come together across silos and boundaries, built trust + challenged their own assumptions, values, mindsets
- An **embodied appreciation of the role that arts, artists, and artistic practices** can play in systemic community change efforts, modeled throughout the Lab process
- Multiple, **organically formed, cross-sector working groups** dedicated to developing arts-based strategies for systemic change
- **Greater capacity** to integrate the arts into taking on similar systemic challenges in the future

**Choose one card** that captures something important about **a major complex challenge** that your community is facing

**Choose a second card** that captures **what your community would be like** if this challenge was successfully addressed

*Then...* Get together in groups of 4. Explain why you selected each of your cards. The others offer their own perspectives on the cards, and what they see. Go round each person. Then review the two sets of cards as a whole.



# Recruiting Collaborative Partners in the Community

Sketch this person or draw a shape that represents them

**NAME:**

**AFFILIATION:**

**PRIMARY CATEGORY:**

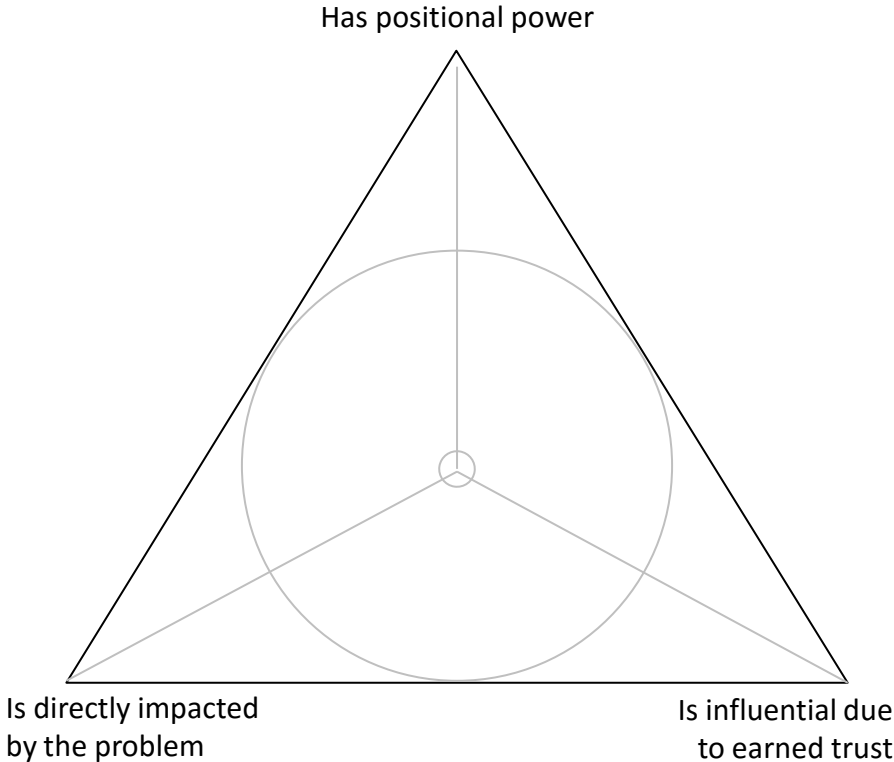
**SECONDARY CATEGORIES:**

Where would you place this person in the triangle?

How much 'process tolerance' does this person have?

\_\_\_\_\_

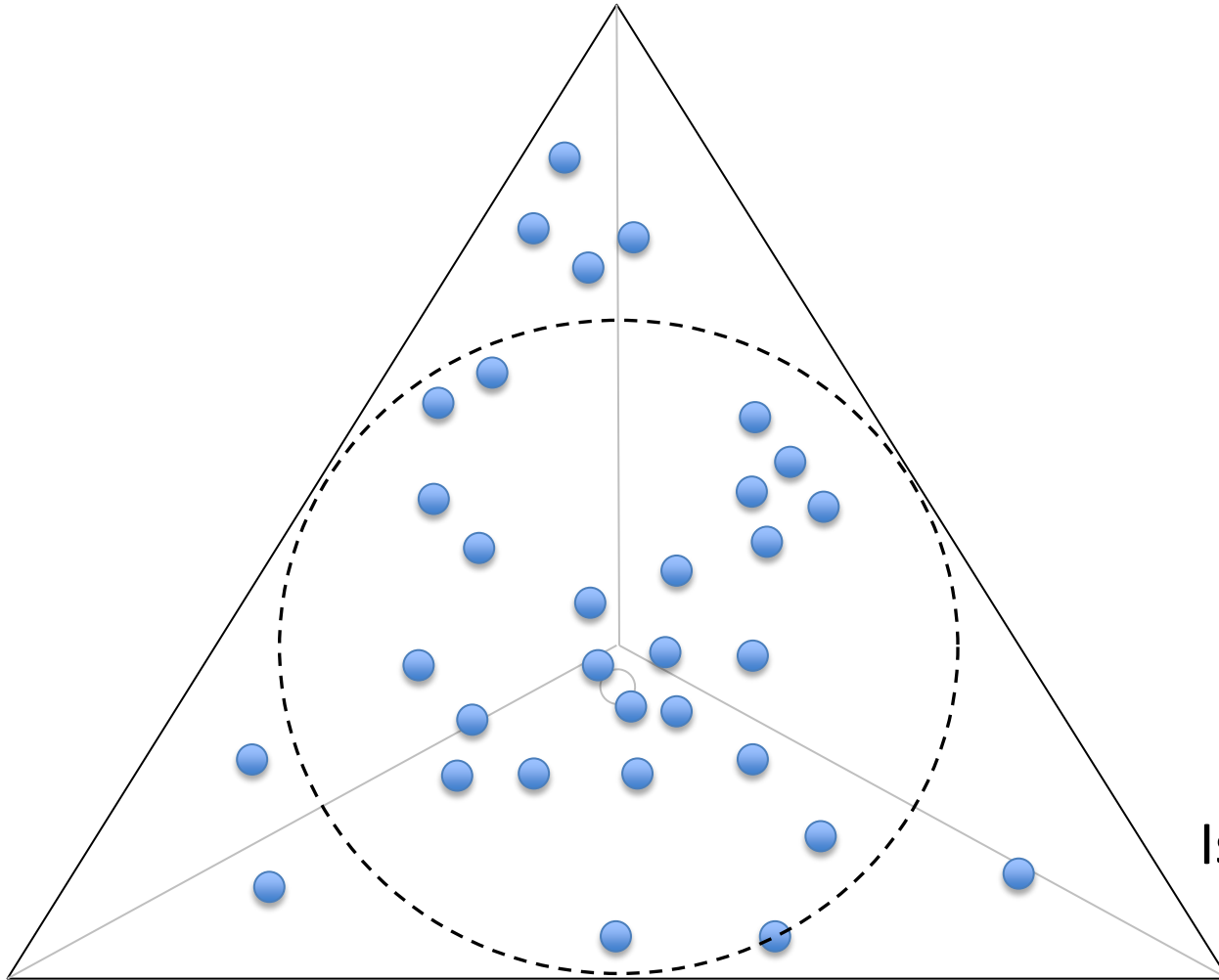
none A lot



**Demographics (circle all that apply)**

Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origins	Male
American Indian or Alaska Native	Female
Asian	Other/Doesn't identify as male or female
Black or African American	
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	Under 21
White	21-35
	35-50
	50-65
Low income	65+
Middle income	Below, add anything else that might be relevant:
High income	

Has positional power



Is directly impacted by the problem

Is influential due to earned trust



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