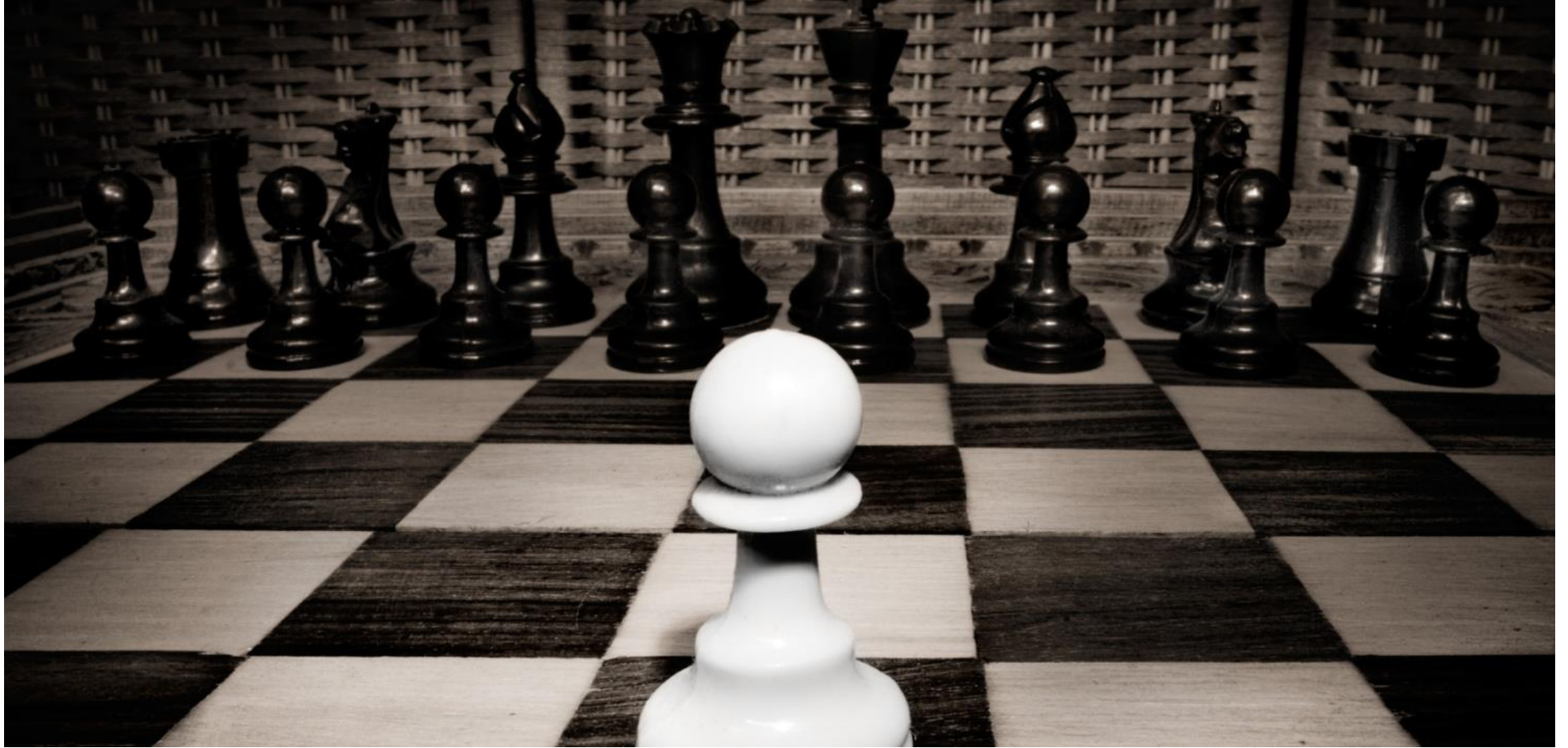




THE CIVIC CANOPY

# Public Engagement Reconsidered: Collective Commitment to Collective Impact

Bill Fulton  
Executive Director



“Some problems are so complex that you have to be highly intelligent and well informed just to be undecided about them.”

--Laurence J. Peter



# Overview of Presentation

---

- **The Challenge of Collaboration**
  - Brain Structure and the SCARF Model
  - The Prisoner's Dilemma
- **Overcoming Collaborative Challenges**
  - Building and Transferring Commitment
  - Groups as Energy Fields
- **Collective Impact and Public Engagement**
  - Overview and Case Studies
  - Implications for Future Work

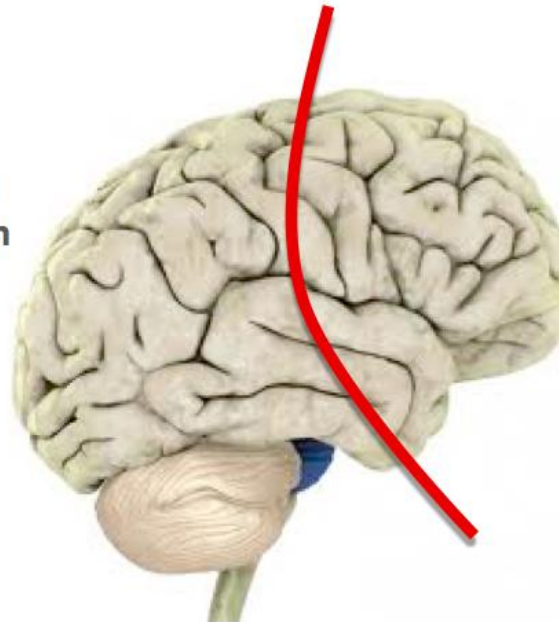


# Begin with the Brain in Mind

- System 1

- Intuitive thinking
- Emotional response
- Automated functions
- Fight or flight instincts
- “Believing”

System 1:  
Back Brain



System 2:  
Front Brain

- System 2

- Higher level thinking
- Self-regulation
- Creativity, adaptability
- Recall
- “Doubting”



# Solve this problem as quickly as you can:

---

- A bat and a ball cost a total of \$1.10
- The bat costs 1 dollar more than the ball.
- How much does the ball cost?



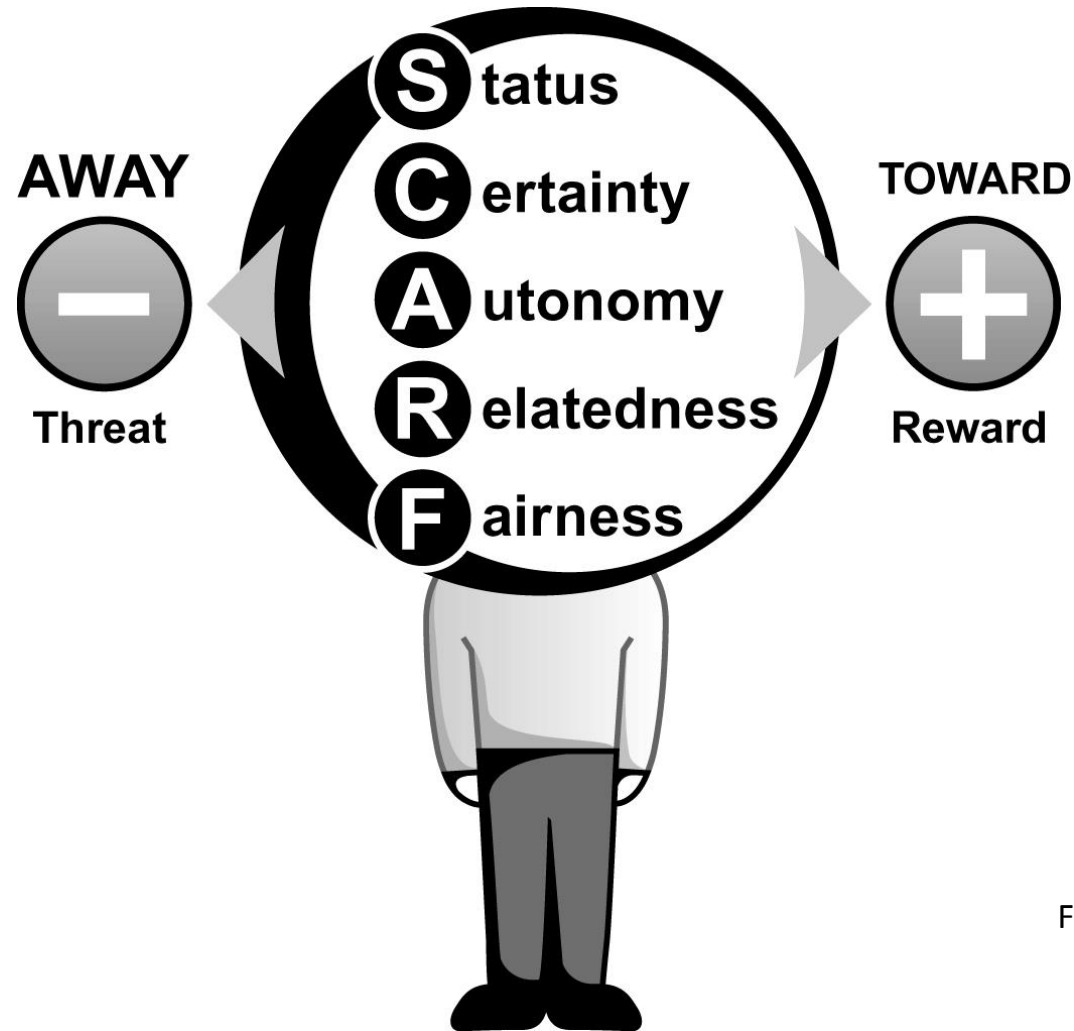
## Brain is easily distracted

---

***Scanning the environment 5  
times a second  
looking for threat/reward***



# Triggering the Threat or Reward State



From David Rock, *Managing with the Brain in Mind*



# Social Cues = Physical Cues

---

## **Threat State**

- Blood flows to largest muscle groups, away from PFC
- Vision narrows
- Heart rate elevated
- Over-representation of additional threats

## **Reward State**

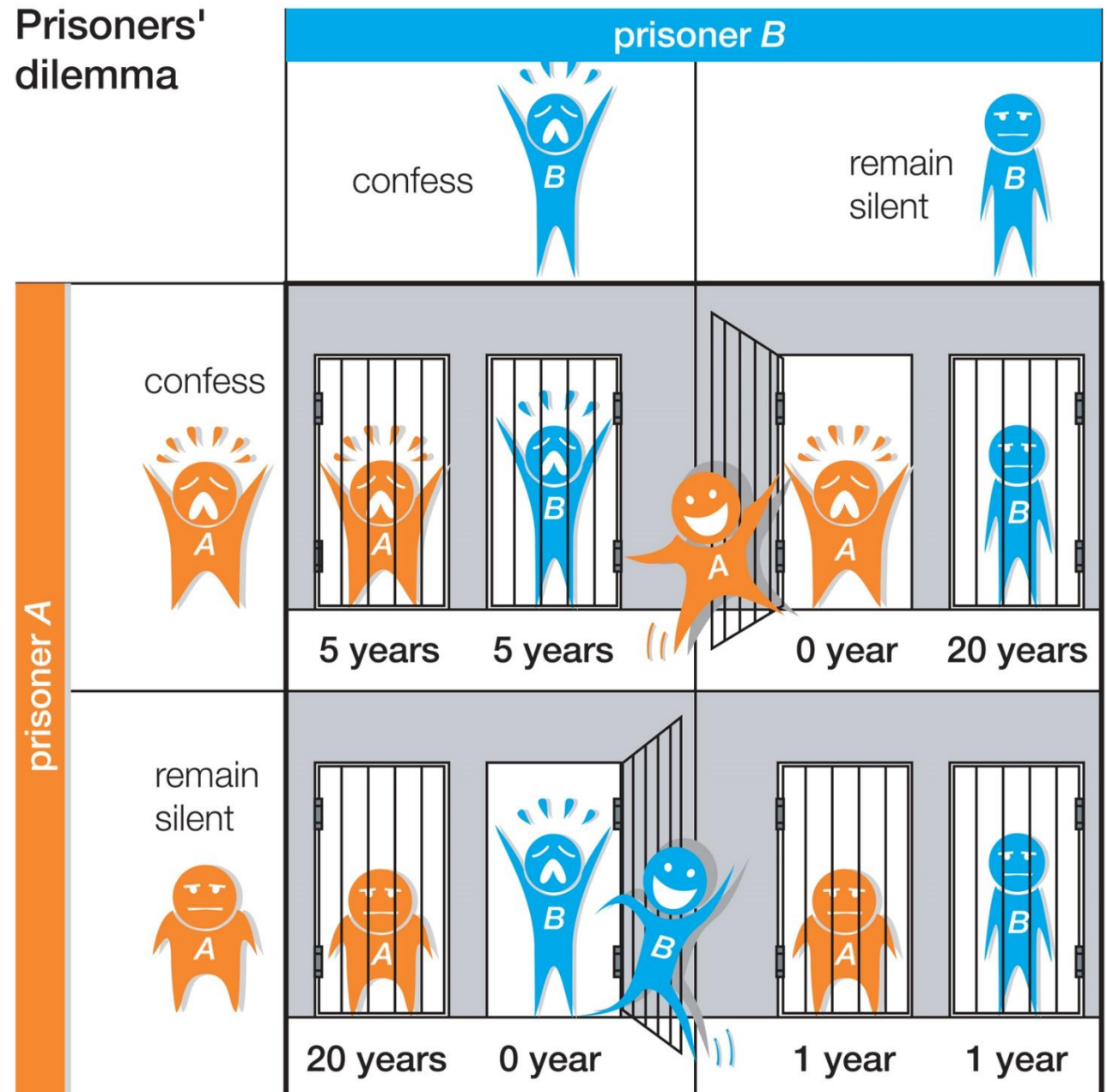
- Attention is heightened
- Vision is expanded
- Executive functions heightened—focus, recall, creativity, self-regulation





# Prisoners' Dilemma

- Highlights the tendency to default to self-interest in low-trust contexts
- Although the “greater good” would be served by both parties remaining silent (mutual commitment), self-interest drives toward a sub-optimal solution (mutual betrayal)
- Strategies change when played over multiple rounds, leading toward the possibility of more collaborative strategies (generous tit-for-tat)





# Overview of Presentation

---

- The Challenge of Collaboration
  - Brain Structure and the SCARF Model
  - The Prisoner's Dilemma
- Overcoming Collaborative Challenges
  - Building and Transferring Commitment
  - Groups as Energy Fields
- Collective Impact and Public Engagement
  - Overview and Case Studies
  - Implications for Future Work



# Team Energy Correlates with Success

---

*“Productive teams have certain data signatures, and they’re so consistent that we can predict a team’s success simply by looking at the data—without ever meeting its members. We’ve been able to foretell, for example, which teams will win a business plan contest, solely on the basis of data collected from team members wearing badges at a cocktail reception. We’ve predicted the financial results that teams making investments would achieve, just on the basis of data collected during their negotiations.”*

--Alex “Sandy” Pentland, “The New Science of Building Great Teams.” *Harvard Business Review*, April 2012



# Hallmarks of High Quality Process

---

- **Inclusion**—those affected by a decision have input into the decision
- **Equality**—affords all stakeholders equal opportunities to contribute and influence outcomes irrespective of role or background
- **Problem-focused**—people’s efforts are focused on the common good, not just advancing individual interests
- **Authenticity**—stakeholders feel they can make binding commitments without those being rescinded by agents with higher levels of authority



# Process Quality Shapes Collaboration

...if stakeholders perceive the process as unfair, they may be more likely to abandon collaboratives; or worse, they may remain and find ways to manipulate the process to garner more resources for themselves at the expense of others. They will not, however, see their actions as unethical but as the natural outcome of the process itself. The result is a vicious circle of selfishness and the eventual collapse of the collaborative process. On the other hand, when stakeholders perceive the process as fair they will act cooperatively even when they receive less than what they hoped for. And they will take others' needs and desires into consideration in forming their own convictions. **The result is a virtuous circle whereby the initial energy invested into the collaborative fosters greater commitment to the process and stakeholders continue to rededicate themselves and their resources to sustaining joint initiatives.**



# How High Quality Process Addresses the Prisoner's Dilemma

## HQ Process

- Addresses SCARF threats
- Shapes behaviors toward collaborative goals

## Commitment

- Engagement builds group energy
- Energy builds efficacy

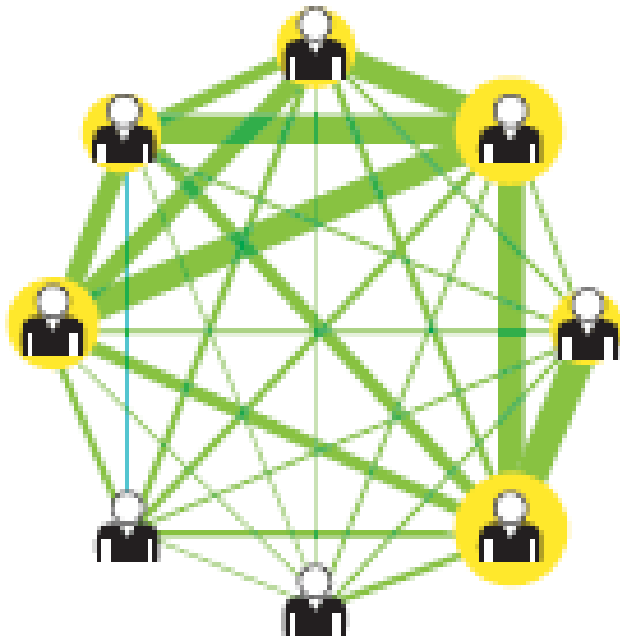
## Transfer of Commitment

- Efficacy rewards investment
- Investment changes the calculus of commitment over time

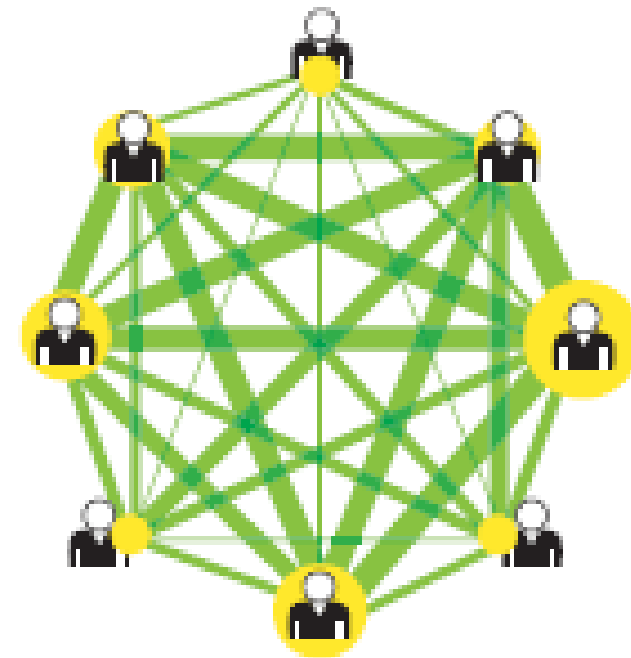


# High Quality Process = Effective Flow of Energy in Group

**“Team Within a Team”**



**Team of Equals**







# Overview of Presentation

---

- The Challenge of Collaboration
  - Brain Structure and the SCARF Model
  - The Prisoner's Dilemma
- Overcoming Collaborative Challenges
  - Building and Transferring Commitment
  - Groups as Energy Fields
- Collective Impact and Public Engagement
  - Overview and Case Studies
  - Implications for Future Work



# What is Collective Impact?

---

- The commitment of a group of important actors from diverse backgrounds and sectors to a common agenda for solving a specific, complex social problem at scale.
- No single organization can create large-scale, lasting social change alone
- Addresses wide variety of issues: education health care, homelessness

# Individual Action to Collaborative Action

## Collaborative Action

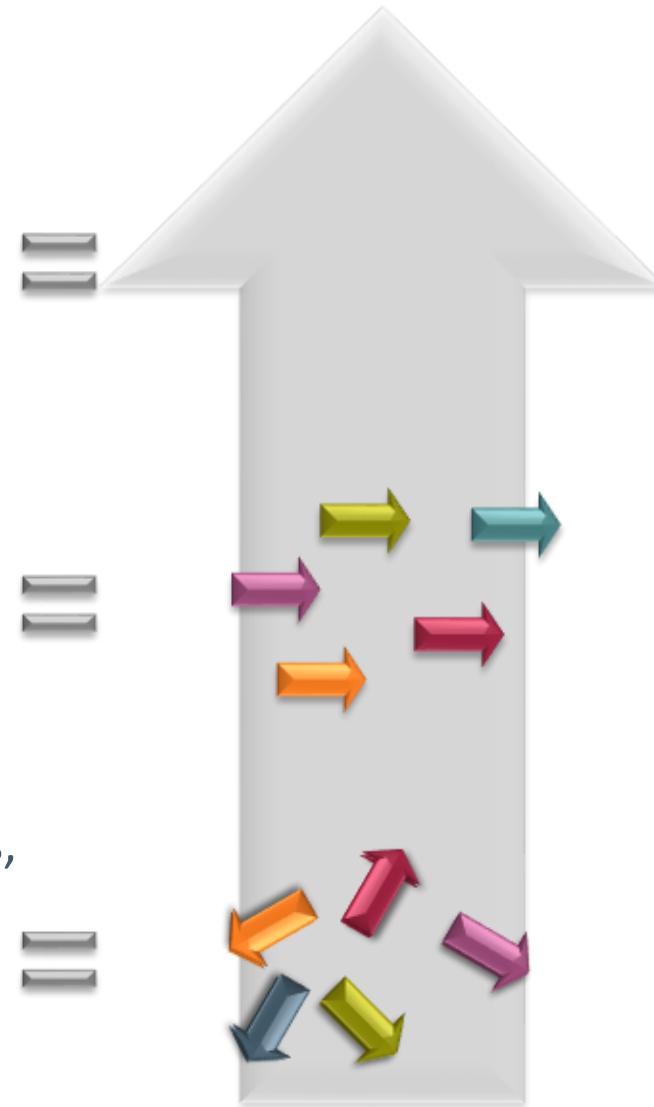
- A group working towards the same outcome,
- Using disaggregated student/school level data
- To continuously improve practices over time

## Coordinated Action

- A group working on the same issue,
- Sharing program information/design,
- Align efforts around a similar issue or population

## Individual Action

- Individual practitioners working on specific issues,
- Collecting qualitative and quantitative data for their individual programs,
- Demonstrate impact with individual students





# 5 (+1) Conditions of Collective Impact

---

1. Backbone Support

2. Common Agenda

3. Shared Measurement

4. Mutually Reinforcing Activities

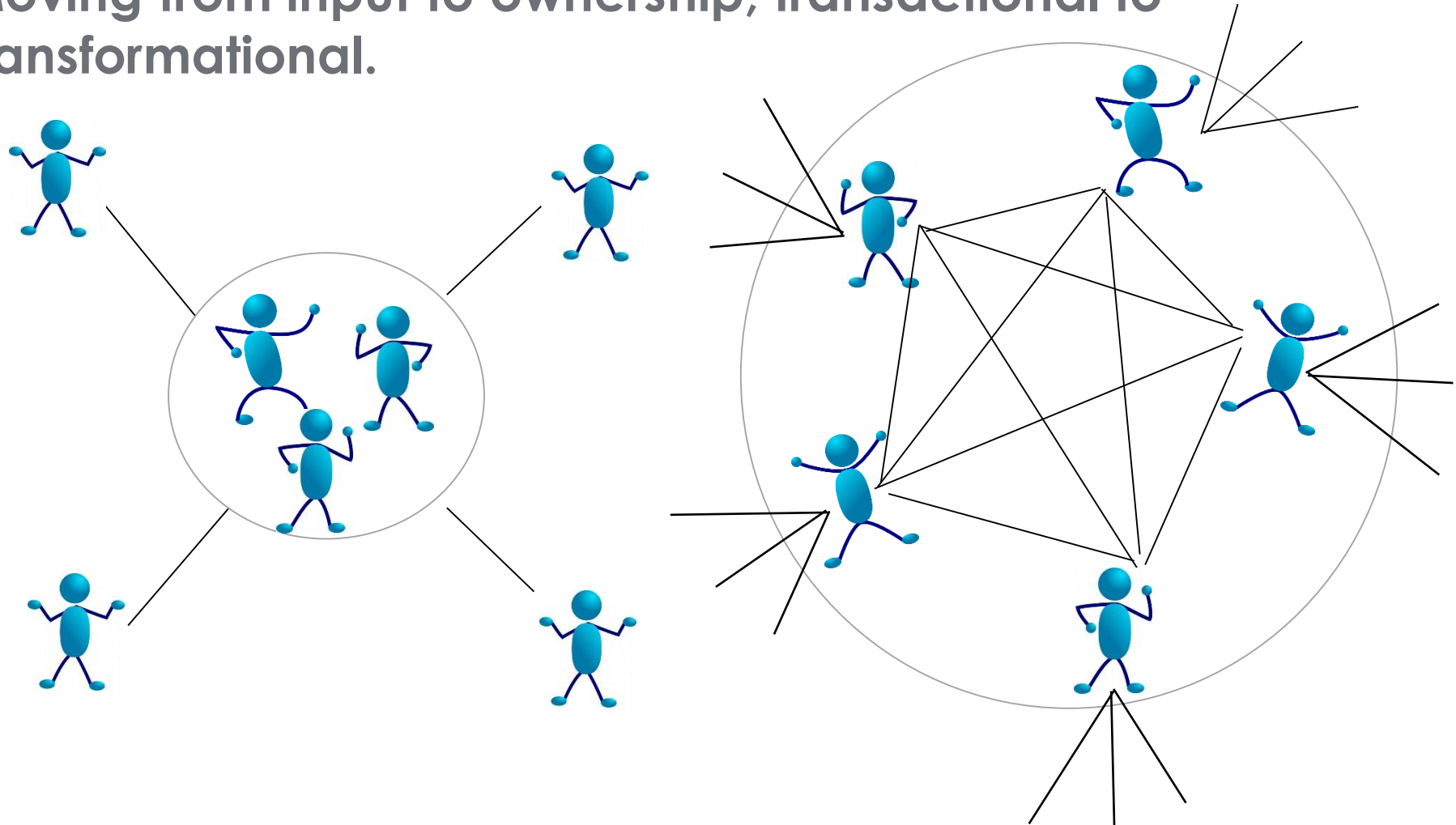
5. Continuous Communication

+1 Authentic Engagement



# Authentic Engagement

Moving from input to ownership, transactional to transformational.





# Mindset Shifts

---

- From “getting buy in” → ensuring true ownership
- Individual programs → influencing systems
- Content → context
- Taking credit → shared leadership



# Case Study: Envision Utah

- Pay attention to the sustainability and capacity of the leading organization (**Backbone Support**)
- Arm the public with clear data and analysis, skillfully marketed (**Shared Measurement and Continuous Communication**)
- Package all proposals and principles to appeal to the values of the community (**Common Agenda**)
- Spend time initiating and maintaining the right political setup (**Authentic Engagement**)

BROOKINGS | UNLV  
BROOKINGS MOUNTAIN WEST

December 2012

## The Utah Model: Lessons for Regional Planning

BRENDA SCHEER

**Summary**

Utah has become an unlikely leader in regional planning through a voluntary partnership of key leaders, agencies, local government, and the general public. Given that regional planning elicits strong reactions from residents, the success of Envision Utah—the regional planning in Utah—in management holds lessons for other regions.

Envision Utah adopted several regional planning efforts from other regions, but it succeeded by not only tapping into people because of its significant public to demonstrate the need to act from important stakeholders in the region.

As more is learned from Envision Utah, a number of takeaways appear:



- Pay attention to the sustainability and capacity of the leading organization
- Arm the public with clear data and analysis, skillfully marketed
- Package all proposals and principles to appeal to the values of the community
- Spend time initiating and maintaining the right political setup

**Introduction**

Utah may be the last place that innovation and leadership in regional planning. Utah boasts a staunch property for all things related to governance.

Brookings

THE HISTORY OF  
ENVISION UTAH





# Implications for Future Work

---

- Think of public engagement as a means of developing public energy
- Utilize high quality processes to address SCARF threats and build collective commitment
- Support collective commitment by creating the conditions of collective impact
- Maintain a culture of collaboration to create upward spirals that break out of the prisoners' dilemma





Thank you!

Bill Fulton  
[bill@civicc canopy.org](mailto:bill@civicc canopy.org)