



# Evaluating Systems Change: An Inquiry Framework

Institute for Child &  
Family Well Being

April 8, 2020



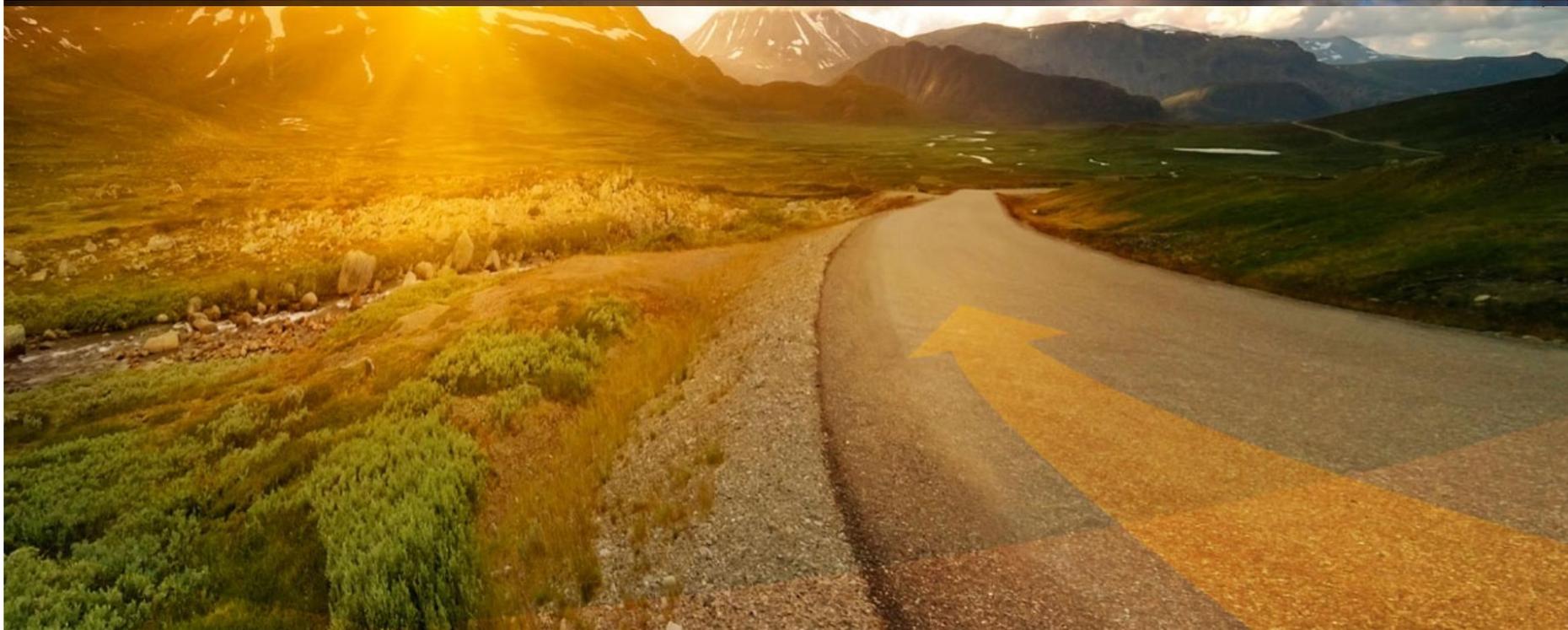
Mark Cabaj  
**Here to There**  
CONSULTING INC

[ABOUT](#)

[SERVICES](#)

[RESOURCES](#)

[BLOG](#)

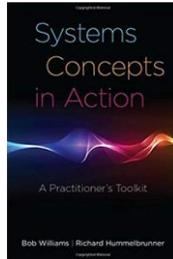


# 1. Context

---

Types of Evaluation | Principles Versus Recipes | Decision-Making Pie

# More and more resources



**DESCRIBING.** Systems Concepts in Action by Williams & Hummelbrunner.



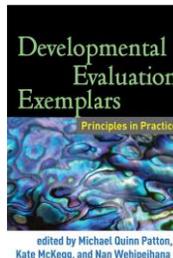
**PLANNING.** Planning Systems Change Evaluation by Meg Hargreaves.



**PRINCIPLES.** Principles for Evaluating Complexity. Preskill & Gopal et al.



**METHODS.** Center for Evaluation Innovation, by Coffman & Beer

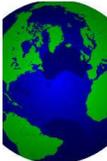


**OVERALL ORIENTATION.** Developmental Evaluation Exemplars by Patton, McKegg, Wehipeihana

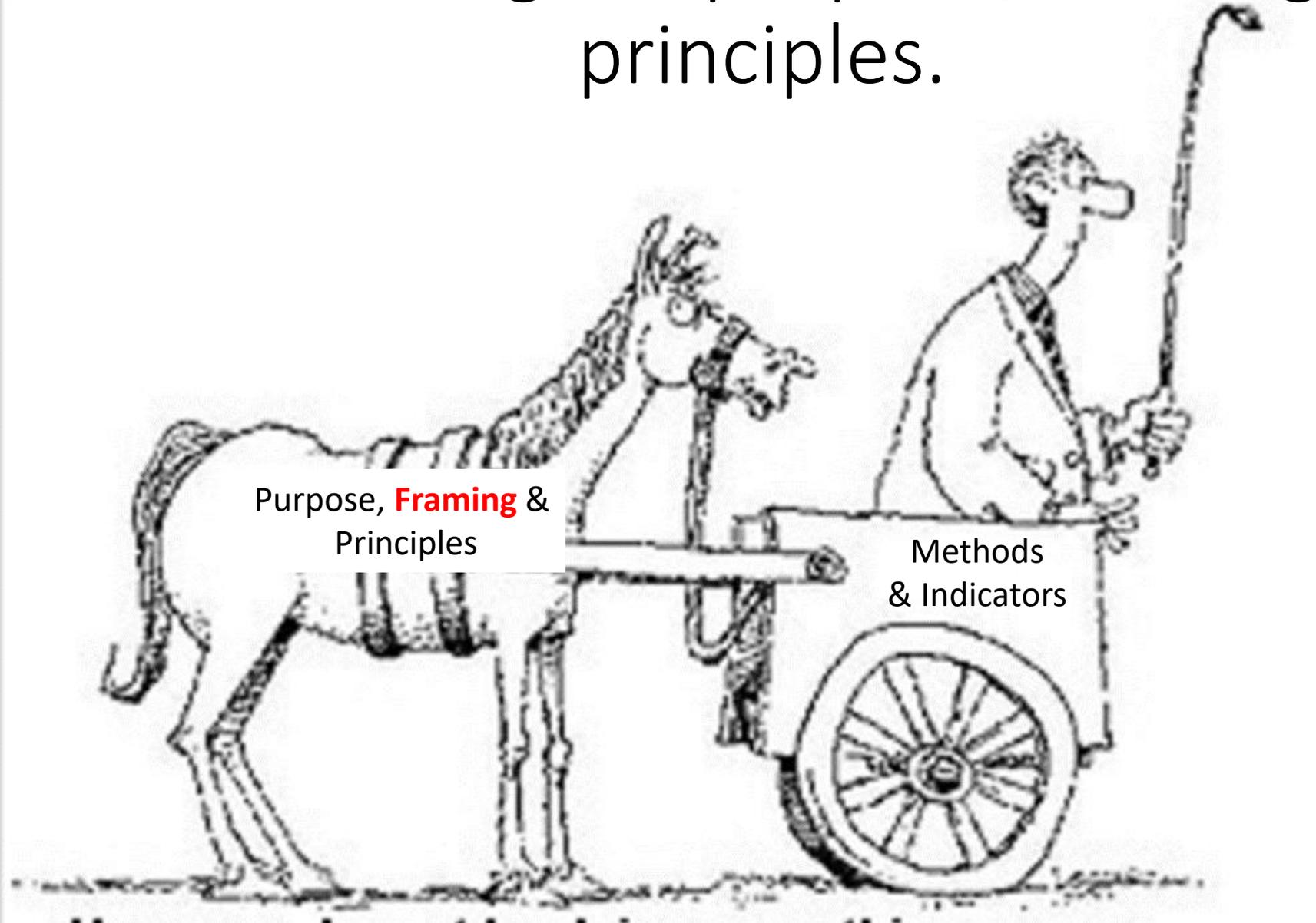


**CASE STUDIES.** Regularly added to Better Evaluation website and journals of evaluation.

# ... and some very interesting domain specific results frameworks emerging

 <p>Health Systems</p>	 <p>Food Security</p>	 <p>Workforce Development</p>
 <p>Climate Change</p>	 <p>Child Welfare System</p>	 <p>Education System</p>
 <p>Justice System</p>	 <p>Housing</p>	 <p>And many more ...</p>

... but shortage of purpose, framing and principles.



Purpose, **Framing** &  
Principles

Methods  
& Indicators

# Evaluation Purpose

6 MAJOR TYPES OF EVALUATION			
PURPOSE	PRIORITY QUESTIONS	COMMON METHODS	KEY FACTORS AFFECTING USE
<b>Developmental</b> Creation and adaptation in complex, emergent and dynamic conditions.	What is happening in the context in which the program operates? What can we control and not control? What is developing? What are the effects of the program? What are the options for the next iteration of the program?	Emergent evaluation Complexity frameworks Ex ante evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Innovators interest in using data to inform their decisions</li> <li>Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty</li> <li>Balancing quality and speed of feedback</li> <li>Integrate and synthesize multiple and conflicting sources of data</li> </ul>
<b>Formative</b> Improve the design and delivery of program/model.	What is working and what is not? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the program? What works for whom, in what context, and why? How can results be increased and costs reduced?	Quality enhancement Learning reviews Reflective practice Participant feedback Appreciative Inquiry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a learning climate, openness to feedback and change</li> <li>Trust</li> <li>Evaluator skills in facilitated learning</li> <li>Relevance of findings</li> </ul>
<b>Summative</b> Determine the value and future of the program/ model.	To what extent does the program achieve its goals? Does the program have value for money? How do its outcomes and costs compare with other options? To what extent can outcomes be attributed to the interventions? Should this program be sustained, wound down, replicated or scaled?	Impact Evaluation Cost-Benefit Analysis Randomized Controlled Trials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Independence and credibility of the evaluator</li> <li>Rigor of the design: validity and generalizability</li> <li>Significance of the findings to decision-makers</li> <li>Timeliness</li> </ul>
<b>Accountability</b> Demonstrate that resources are well managed and efficiently implemented.	Are funds being used for intended purposes? Are goals and targets being met? Are problems being handled? Is implementation following the approved plan? Are quality-control mechanisms in place and being used?	Program audits and inspections Performance measurement and monitoring Accreditation and licensing End-of-project lists Scorecards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Government and funder mandated reporting</li> <li>Validated indicators</li> <li>Integrity and credibility of the system and those reporting</li> <li>Balance and consistency of reporting.</li> </ul>
<b>Monitoring</b> Manage a program, routine reporting.	Are inputs and processes flowing smoothly? What are participation and dropout rates? Are these changing? Are outputs being produced as anticipated and scheduled? What bottlenecks are emerging? What variations occur across sub-groups?	Management information systems Quality control systems Continuous quality improvement, Six Sigma, routine reporting, performance indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeliness, regularity, relevance, and consistency of reporting</li> <li>Incentives to input data at field level and to use it at management level</li> <li>Capacity and resources to manage system</li> <li>Appropriate links to accountability system</li> </ul>
<b>Knowledge Generation</b> Enhance general understandings and identify generic principles about effectiveness	What are the general patterns and principles of effectiveness in programs, projects and sites? What lessons being learned? What principles can be extracted across results to inform practice?	Cluster evaluation Meta-analyses Synthesis evaluation Lessons Learned Effective practice studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality and comparability of source used</li> <li>Quality of synthesis</li> <li>Capacity of users to extrapolate</li> <li>Rigour of triangulation</li> <li>Identifying principles that can inform practice</li> </ul>

# Principles

## WHAT WE KNOW SO FAR ABOUT Sets of Principles for Evaluating Systems Change Efforts

The idea of using principles to guide evaluation is not new. Evaluators learned a long time ago that it was difficult to describe the “best” design or methods: an evaluation to determine if a Bangladeshi micro-lending program is replicable in a New York City neighbourhood will differ from one conducted by a Health Ministry in the United Kingdom, that uses rapid improvement cycles to reduce wait times in hospital emergency rooms. There is an endless variety in issues, interventions, user questions, available resources, evaluator skill, etc. It is impossible to arrive at a single design that can address all of them.

As a result, evaluators have increasingly focused on developing universal principles that identify key considerations to keep in mind when carrying out an assessment. It is then up to evaluators and innovators to figure out how to apply these principles, case by case. Take, for example, the simple principle: “We cannot evaluate everything we want to assess, so we must focus our attention on what is important.” How that looks in practice depends entirely on the unique context of an initiative.

Evaluation principles are now popping up everywhere. The Hewlett Foundation created its own set to help design internal (and contracted) evaluations of its granting programs

(Twersky & Lindblom 2007). In Canada, the Collaborative Opportunities to Value Evaluation group has developed principles to guide collaborative approaches to assessment (Shulha et al. 2016). Fetterman (1994) has put together a set of principles to guide an empowerment model of evaluation. Once you start looking for evaluation principles, you can see them everywhere.

Yet, despite this mainstreaming of principles-based approaches to evaluation, there has been relatively little work on creating principles to guide the evaluation of systems change efforts. The reason is simple: evaluation practitioners are a few steps behind the social innovators’ rapid and widespread adoption of system change strategies. It’s a big game of “catch up.”

Thankfully, there has been progress. The table below describes three sets of principles developed by leaders in evaluation in North America (and beyond). They are excellent: I refer to them regularly. However, I also draw on my own set which I created and refined 2001-2011 while directing the Vibrant Communities initiative, a network of 15 urban collaboratives seeking to reduce poverty. Much of its work concerned changing

Principles	Description
Developmental Evaluation Exemplars: Principles in Practice (Patton, McKegg, & Wehipeihana 2015)	8 principles to guide complexity-based, developmental evaluation, one of which includes “systems” lenses.
Evaluating Complexity: Propositions for Practice (Pre-skill, Gopal, Mack, Cook 2014)	9 propositions that are embedded in a complexity world view of stubborn social, economic, and environmental challenges.
Framework for Evaluating Systems Change (Coffman 2007).	11 principles focused on systems change, with an extra focus on human services systems.

# Key Framing Points

1. Why change systems?
2. What is a system?
3. What do results in a system change efforts look like?
4. What are the implications of disruptive events?
5. So what are the implications and questions for you work?

# 1. Why change systems?

---

Achieving impact at scale.



# The Case for Systems Change

---

***Programmatic interventions help people beat the odds.***

***Systemic interventions can help change their odds.***

**Karen Pittman**

CEO, Forum on Youth Investment

Keynote at Tamarack Community Change Institute

Vancouver, 2015

# The Case for Systems Change

---

**Systems change is about shifting the conditions that hold a problem in place.**

**Social Innovation Generation Canada**



## 2. What is a system?

---

Boundaries + Actors + Relationships & More



# What does system change mean?

---

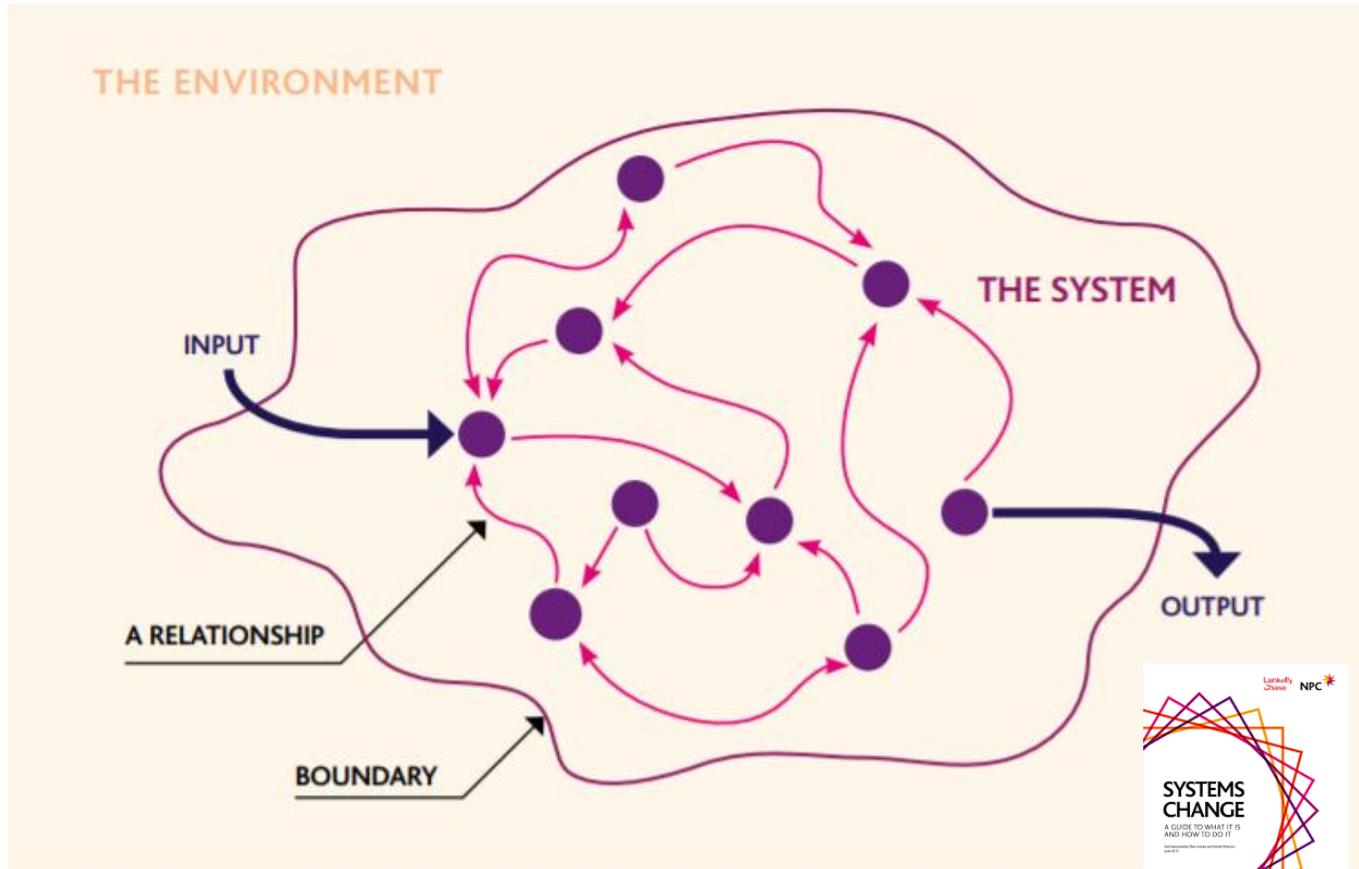
I was asked to work with innovators in the national health program of a smaller country. When I started working with the group, they said, ‘We aim to shift the health system.’ After listening for a few hours, I said, ‘Honestly, I have no idea what you are doing, or what you are trying to achieve ... and I haven’t a clue how to measure it. I don’t understand what it means to “shift the health system.”’ And they looked at each other and burst out laughing and said, ‘We have no idea either.’

## **Donna Podems**

Experienced Evaluator in South Africa

Developmental Evaluation Exemplars: Principles in Practice. 2018. Patton et al. p. 293).

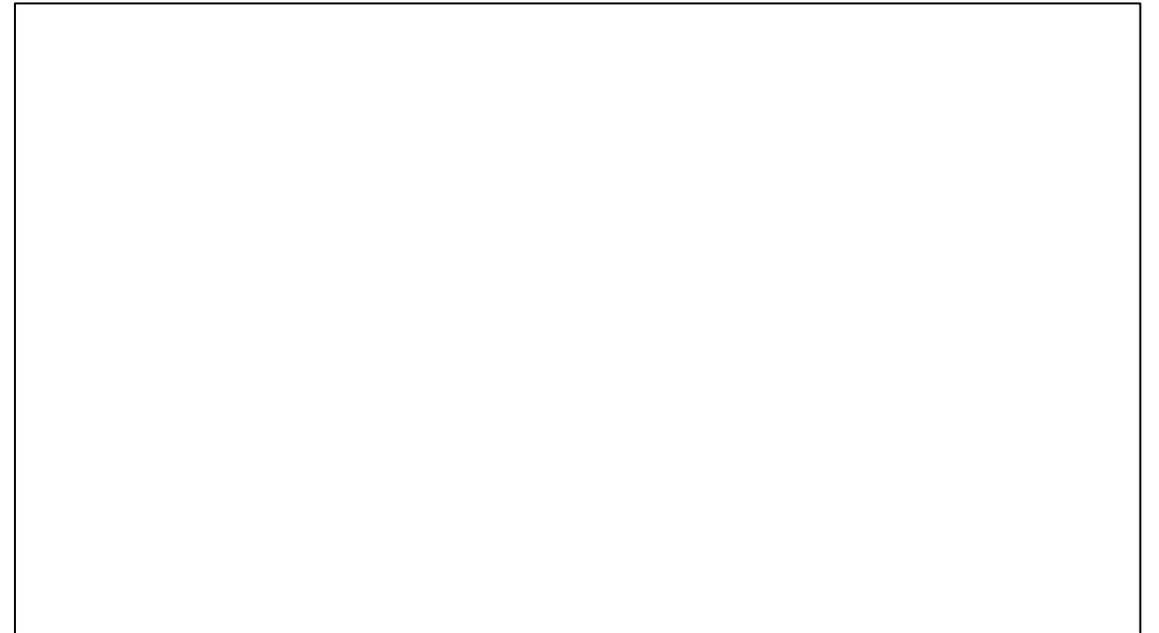
# Key Features



- **Boundaries** (i.e. domain, geographic, scale, etc.)
- **Agents/Actors** (e.g. diverse organizations, people, networks, etc.)
- **Relationships** (e.g. tight-loose, hierarchical-distributed, power, legitimacy, etc.)

# Complex Dynamics

- **Overlapping/Open** – one system is entangled up and influenced by other systems.
- **Emergent behaviour** – system behaviour is the sum of all actors' interactions and actions
- **Non-Linear dynamics** – inputs and outputs/outcomes not clearly related
- **Varying levels of predictability** – a splatter and ripple of effects
- **Ever-evolving** – does not stand still.



# 3. What do results look like?

---

Systems Change | Mission Outcomes | Strategic Learning

# Multiple Results

A framework that provides social innovators, evaluators and funders to consider three types of results they need to inform their ongoing efforts to change systems underlying tough challenges.

## SYSTEMS CHANGE

The extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues.



1. Changes in drivers of system behaviors
2. Changes in behaviors of system actors
3. Changes in overall system behavior(s)

## MISSION OUTCOMES

The extent to which our efforts help to make lives better.



1. Outcomes for individuals
2. Outcomes for targeted geography/groups
3. Outcomes for populations

## STRATEGIC LEARNING

The extent to which efforts uncover insights key to future progress.



1. Learning about what we are doing
2. Learning about how we are thinking
3. Learning about how we are being

# Multiple Results

A framework that provides social innovators, evaluators and funders to consider three types of results they need to inform their ongoing efforts to change systems underlying tough challenges.

## SYSTEMS CHANGE

The extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues.



1. Changes in drivers of system behaviors
2. Changes in behaviors of system actors
3. Changes in overall system behavior(s)

## MISSION OUTCOMES

The extent to which our efforts help to make lives better.



1. Outcomes for individuals
2. Outcomes for targeted geography/groups
3. Outcomes for populations

## STRATEGIC LEARNING

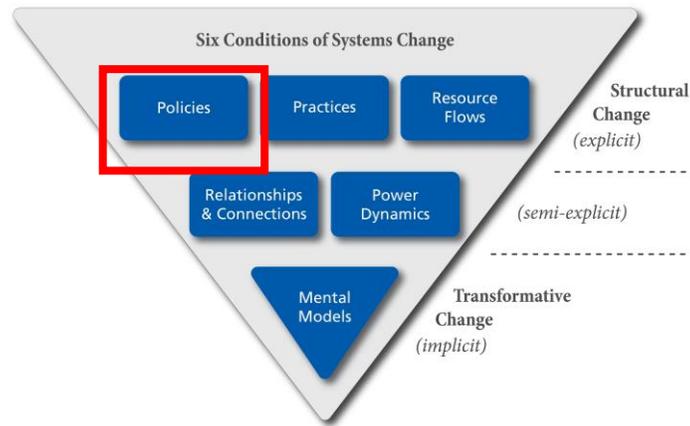
The extent to which efforts uncover insights key to future progress.



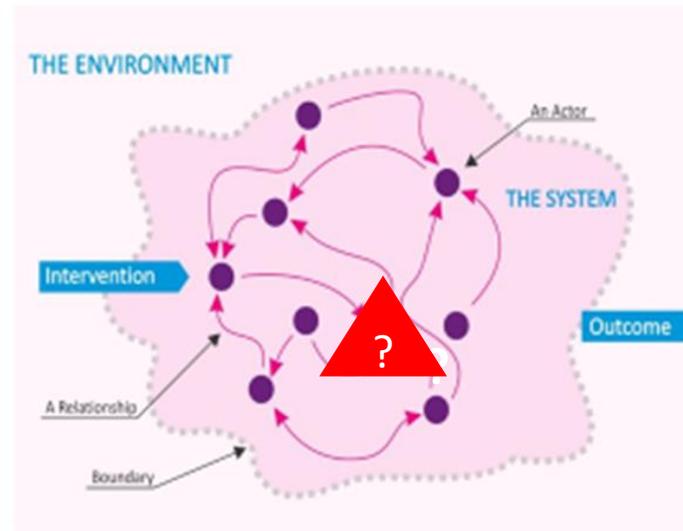
1. Learning about what we are doing
2. Learning about how we are thinking
3. Learning about how we are being

# Three Types of Outcomes

#1: Changing Drivers



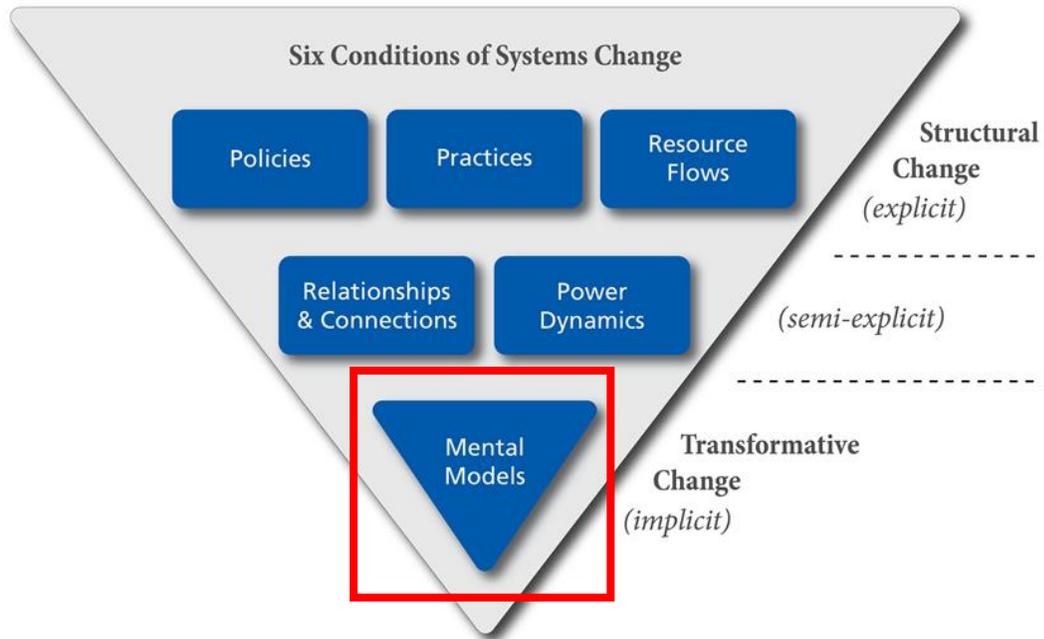
#2 Changing Actor Behaviors



#3 Changing Overall System Behavior



# Example: Housing First



## TYPICAL "HOUSING READINESS"

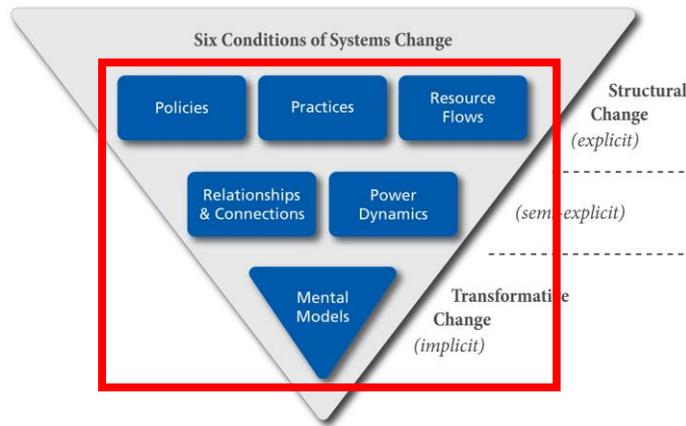


## HOUSING FIRST

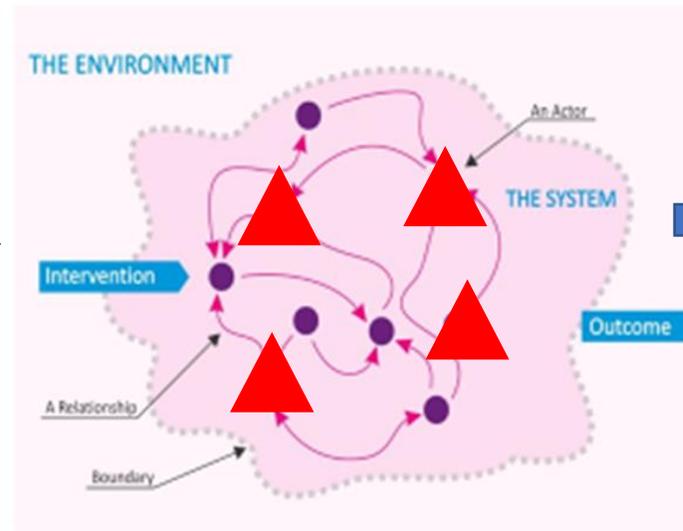


# Three Types of Outcomes

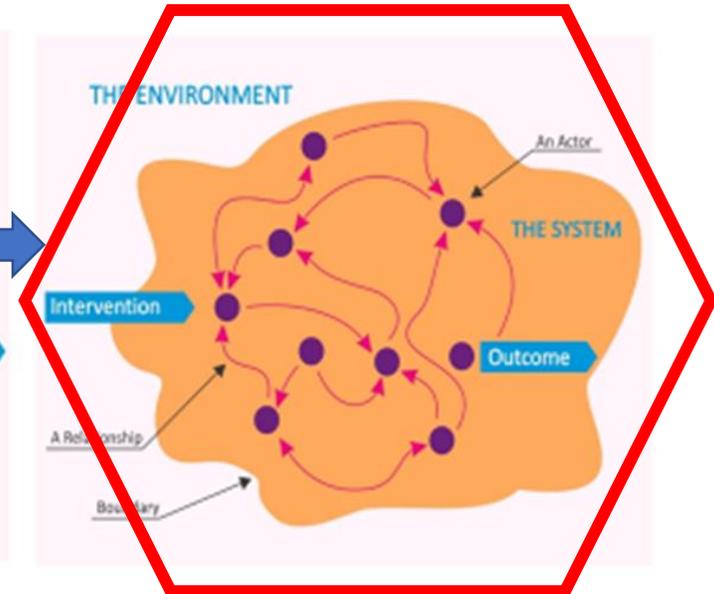
#1: Changing Drivers



#2 Changing Actor Behaviors



#3 Changing Overall System Behavior



# Case Study: Medicine Hat

## Medicine Hat Homelessness Could Reach Its End This Year

The Huffington Post Alberta | By Jesse Ferreras



Posted: 05/14/2015 10:20 am EDT | Updated: 05/15/2015 11:59 am EDT

Poverty Free BC Speaker Series on Impacts and Solutions presents

### The Mayor Who Ended Homelessness

**April 28, 2015**  
**Abbotsford, BC**  
University of the Fraser Valley  
Theatre Room B101  
(33844 King Road)  
6:30-8:30 PM

**April 29, 2015**  
**Vancouver, BC**  
Vancouver General Hospital  
Paetzold Lecture Theatre  
Room 1891  
(899 W 12th Avenue)  
6:30-8:30 PM

**Ted Clugston – Mayor of Medicine Hat, Alberta**  
Once recognized as the Mayor of Medicine Hat, Alberta, Ted Clugston is now a convert. Come and hear how this Alberta city is on the verge of ending homelessness.

**FREE!** Space limited, reserve at [bcpovertyreduction.ca/tedclugston](http://bcpovertyreduction.ca/tedclugston)

# Medicine Hat is about to end homelessness – but then what?



**ANNALISE KLINGBEIL, CALGARY HERALD**

[More from Annalise Klingbeil, Calgary Herald](#)

Published on: April 15, 2015 | Last Updated: May 12, 2015 8:47 PM MDT

# Multiple Results

A framework that provides social innovators, evaluators and funders to consider three types of results they need to inform their ongoing efforts to change systems underlying tough challenges.

## SYSTEMS CHANGE

The extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues.



1. Changes in drivers of system behaviors
2. Changes in behaviors of system actors
3. Changes in overall system behavior(s)

## MISSION OUTCOMES

The extent to which our efforts help to make lives better.



1. Outcomes for individuals
2. Outcomes for targeted geography/groups
3. Outcomes for populations

## STRATEGIC LEARNING

The extent to which efforts uncover insights key to future progress.



1. Learning about what we are doing
2. Learning about how we are thinking
3. Learning about how we are being

## Case Study #2: Payday Lending Reform in Alberta



A collaborative response led by Momentum (Calgary), one of Canada's most sophisticated Community Economic Development organizations, in partnership with many, many others.



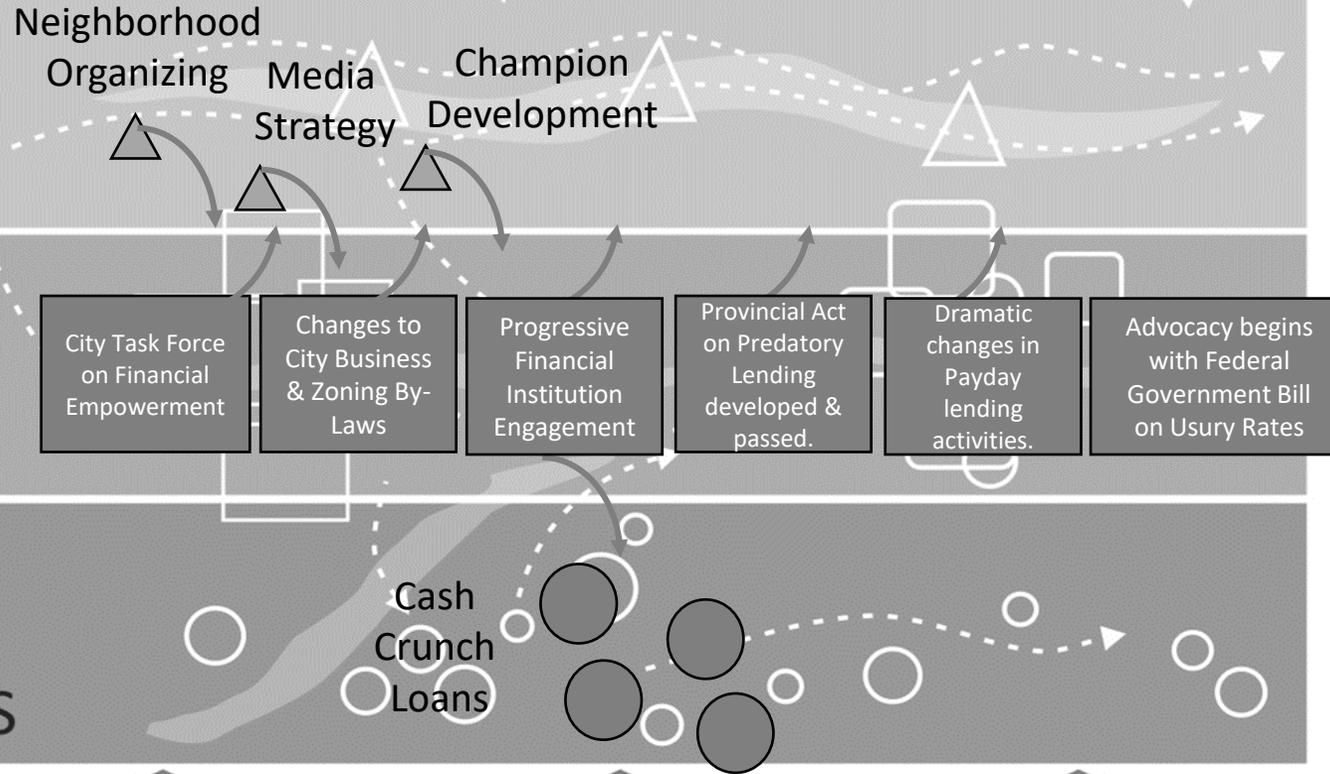
Navigating the  
LANDSCAPE

Shifting  
AWARENESS  
& CULTURE

Nudging  
SYSTEMS

Supporting  
NICHE  
INNOVATIONS

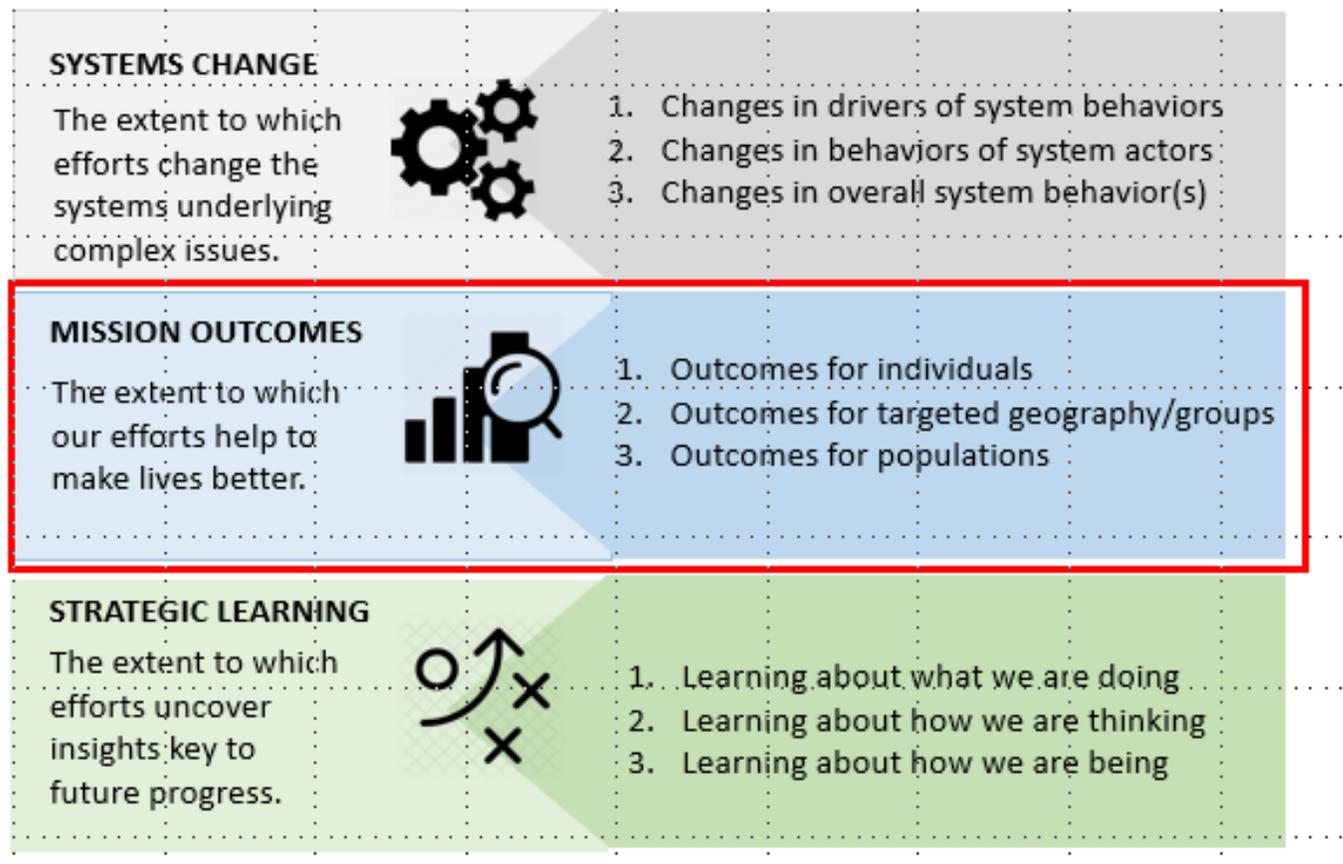
Strengthening  
CAPACITY & AGENCY



MISSION  
IMPACT

# Multiple Results

A framework that provides social innovators, evaluators and funders to consider three types of results they need to inform their ongoing efforts to change systems underlying tough challenges.



## INDIVIDUALS

- Participants in pilot programs obtain lower cost loans
- Borrowers report liking installment model

## TARGETED

- The # of payday lending stores on International Avenue drops from 11 to 3.
- Unknown impact for different demographic groups.

## POPULATION

- The # of payday stores in the Province dropped from 230 to 165, and volume of lending from \$500 mil to \$285 mln, since the Payday lending bill was passed.
- Estimates range from a low of \$55 mln saved interest costs Province wide annually to a high \$33 mln over the 2018 Xmas season in Calgary.

# Multiple Results

A framework that provides social innovators, evaluators and funders to consider three types of results they need to inform their ongoing efforts to change systems underlying tough challenges.

## SYSTEMS CHANGE

The extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues.



1. Changes in drivers of system behaviors
2. Changes in behaviors of system actors
3. Changes in overall system behavior(s)

## MISSION OUTCOMES

The extent to which our efforts help to make lives better.



1. Outcomes for individuals
2. Outcomes for targeted geography/groups
3. Outcomes for populations

## STRATEGIC LEARNING

The extent to which efforts uncover insights key to future progress.

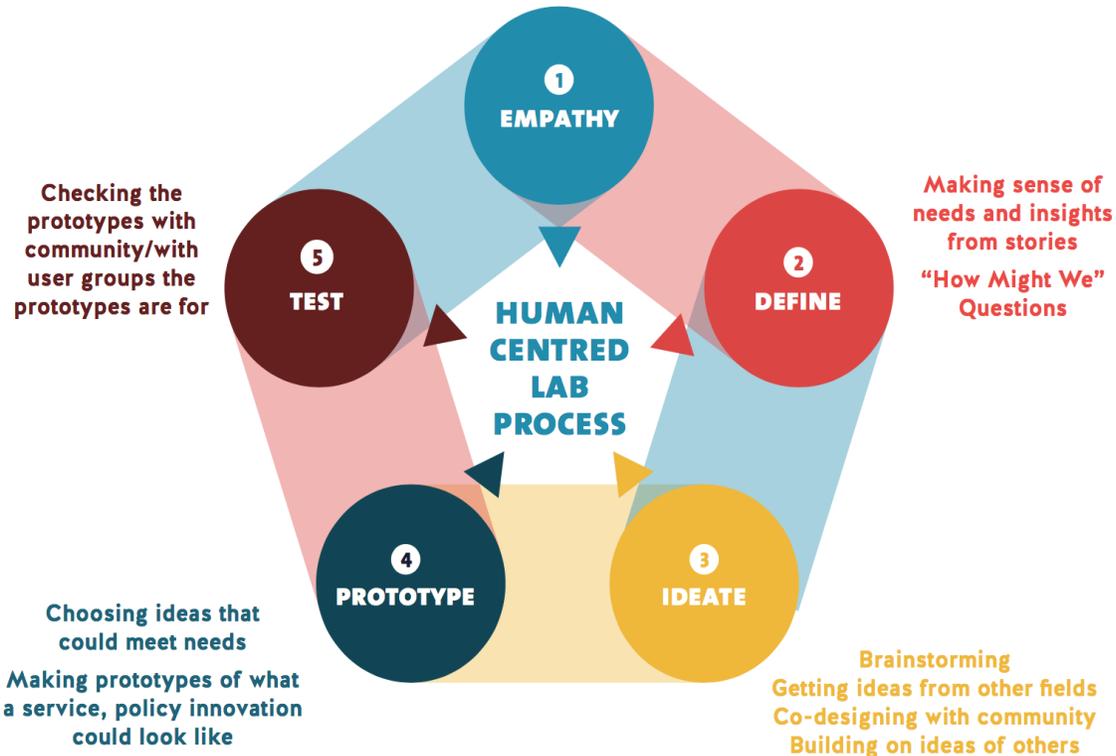


1. Learning about what we are doing
2. Learning about how we are thinking
3. Learning about how we are being

# Case Study: Edmonton's Shift Lab - Human Centered Design to Address Racism & Poverty in the Domain of Housing

## THE APPROACH

Stories  
Ethnographic Research  
Sense Making  
System Mapping



## THE PROTOTYPES



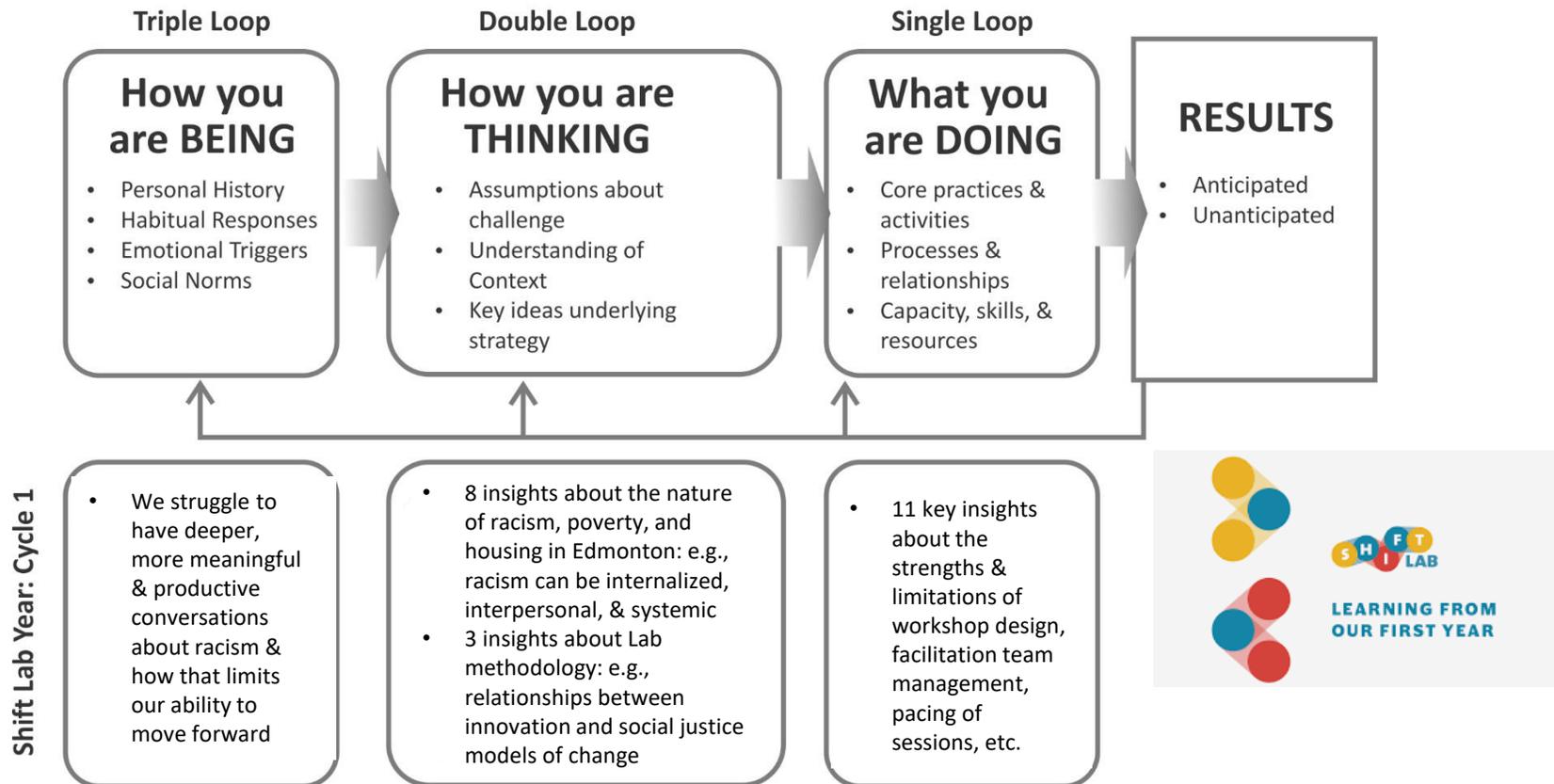
Mobile Legal Aid



Diversity Certification Program for Housing Suppliers



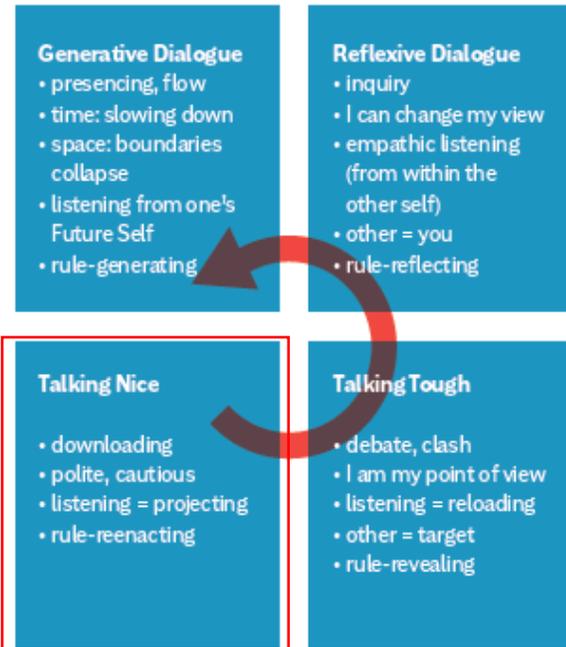
Journey to YIMBY (yes in my back yard)



For a Comprehensive Report: <http://www.edmontonshiftlab.ca/learning-from-our-first-year/>

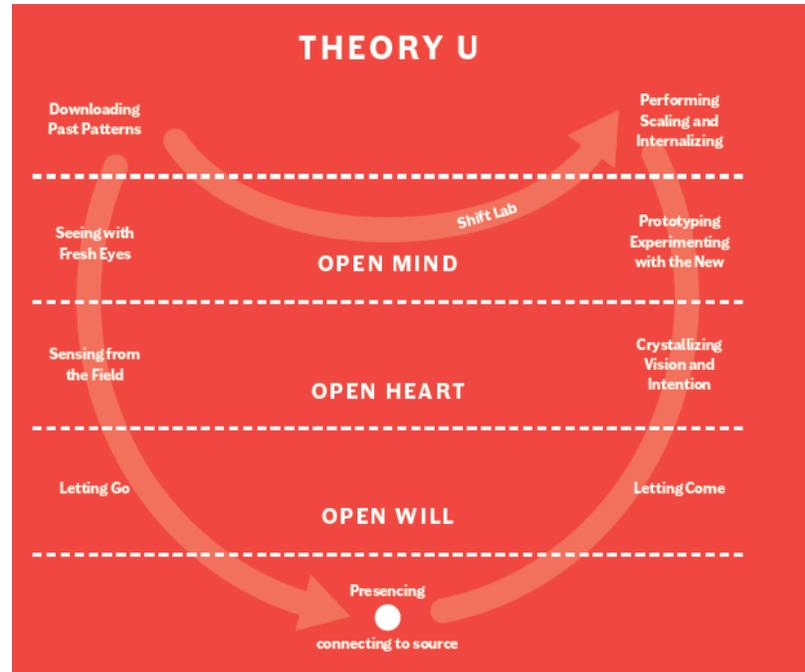
# Mission Critical Triple Loop Learning

## 4 Types of Conversations



We mostly stayed here

and therefore did not go deep enough with our thinking or interventions



# Shift Lab 2.0: Adaptation

- supporting the evolution of the original three prototypes
- includes a strong emphasis on developing capacity for tough and important conversations about racism in Edmonton
- seeks to prototype behavioral change interventions to encourage the 'sleepy middle' of Edmonton to see, understand and respond to racism

Thurs.  
Sept 27



**Shelly Tochluk**  
Educator & Researcher  
Los Angeles, CA

**"Witnessing Whiteness:  
The Need to Talk About  
Race and How to Do It."**

Wed.  
Oct 17



**Daryl Davis**  
Musician, Actor & Author  
Washington, D.C.

**"Klan We Talk? "**

Thurs.  
Nov 27



**Trevor Phillips**  
Author & Broadcaster  
London, U.K.

**"Equality and Integration:  
Why We Can't Afford to Fail."**



## INTERNATIONAL SPEAKER SERIES

Presented by: 

**"How to Have Difficult  
Conversations About Race"**

Hyatt Place Downtown  
9576 Jasper Avenue NW

Race can be a difficult topic to talk about for many. The Edmonton Shift Lab has been exploring various dialogues and perspectives about race, so we invite you to join us for some conversations about race from three notable speakers this fall. We are not trying to provide the "right" answers about race, but instead, help ask better questions. Please see the event link for bios about our speakers and why we have invited them to share their knowledge with Edmonton.

**See the bios of our speakers  
and register online at Eventbrite**

  
CANADA'S ORIGINAL  
NONFICTION FESTIVAL

# Some Resources on Strategic Learning

- <https://www.fsg.org/areas-of-focus/strategic-learning-evaluation>

# Strategic Learning Resources

- The Foundations Strategy Group - <https://www.fsg.org/areas-of-focus/strategic-learning-evaluation> – a good set of basic resources.
- The Center for Evaluation Innovation - <https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/topics/> - veteran evaluators with some case studies and techniques.
- Philanthropic Review - <https://johnsoncenter.org/resources/thefoundationreview/> - includes good examples of strategic learning in action.

# What are your initial impressions of the framework?

## Multiple Results

A framework that provides social innovators, evaluators and funders to consider three types of results they need to inform their ongoing efforts to change systems underlying tough challenges.

### SYSTEMS CHANGE

The extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues.



1. Changes in drivers of system behaviors
2. Changes in behaviors of system actors
3. Changes in overall system behavior(s)

### MISSION OUTCOMES

The extent to which our efforts help to make lives better.



1. Outcomes for individuals
2. Outcomes for targeted geography/groups
3. Outcomes for populations

### STRATEGIC LEARNING

The extent to which efforts uncover insights key to future progress.



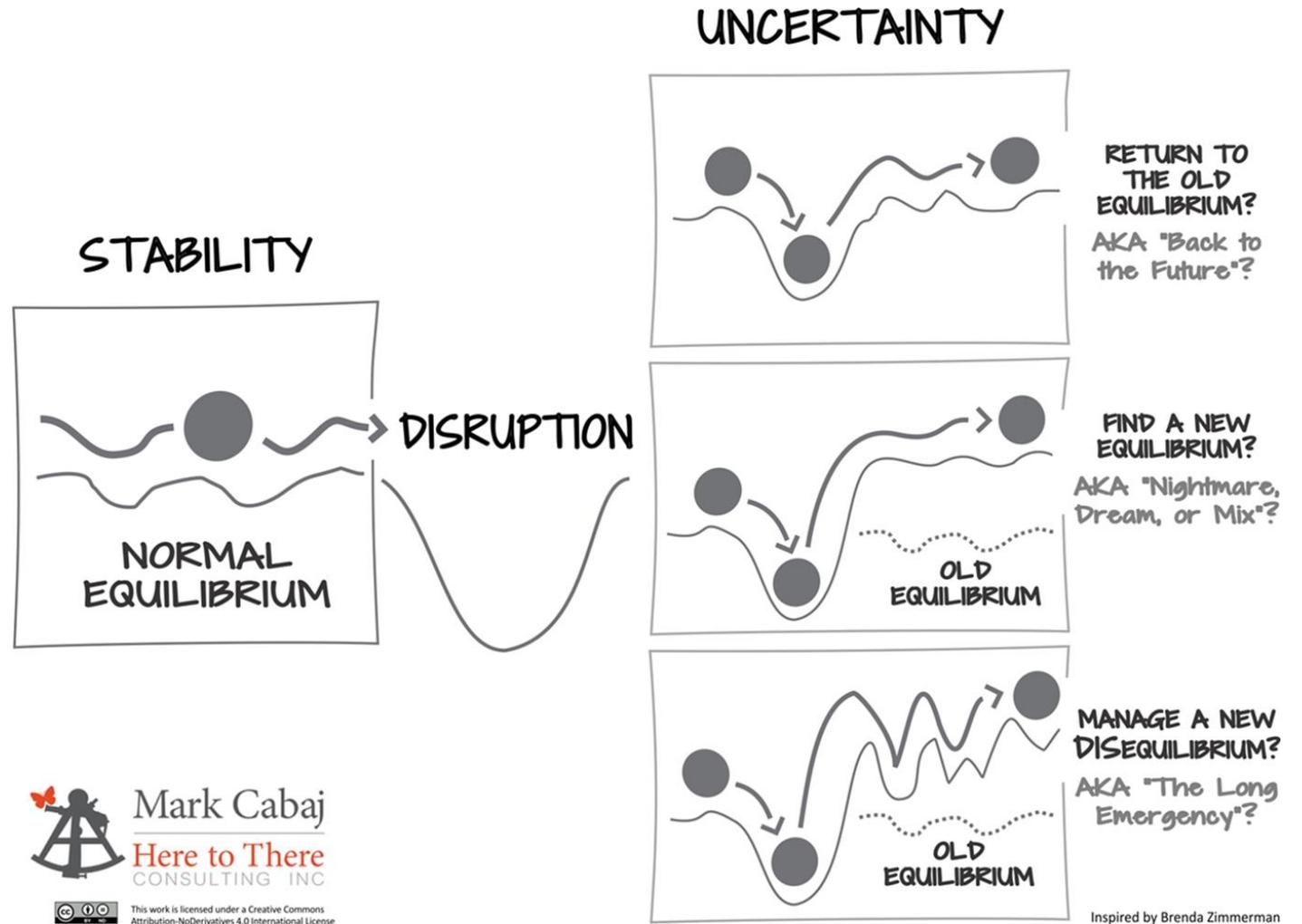
1. Learning about what we are doing
2. Learning about how we are thinking
3. Learning about how we are being

# 5. What are the implications of disruptive events?

---

Uncertain Futures

# Disruptions & Uncertainty



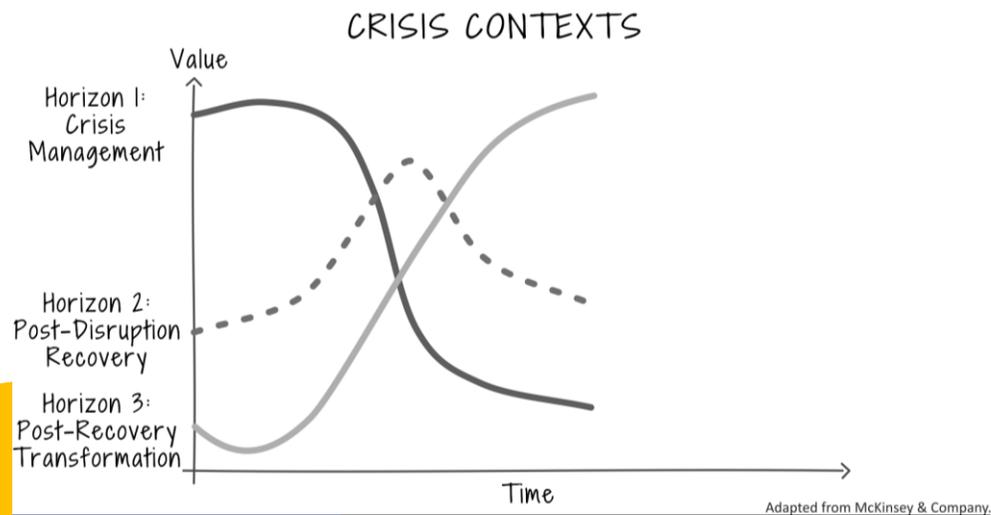
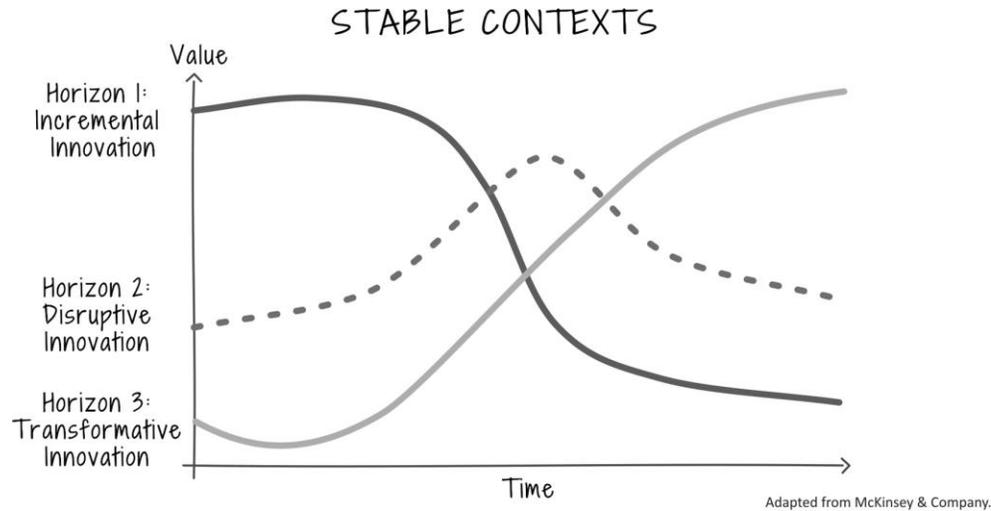
Mark Cabaj  
Here to There  
CONSULTING INC



This work is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0 International License

Inspired by Brenda Zimmerman

# Three Horizons Revisited



- This adapted version of the Three Horizons Framework illustrates that the various horizons for developing innovative responses to complex issues differs changes from stable to crisis contexts.

<https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/strategy-and-corporate-finance/our-insights/enduring-ideas-the-three-horizons-of-growth>

# Three Horizons: Stable versus Crisis Contexts

	Stable Contexts		Crisis Context
Horizon 1: Incremental Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Aim to develop ideas, actions and practices that <b>improve - but don't disrupt</b> - the current system</li> <li>Level of effort is routine; results are relatively predictable, low risk, immediate, yet modest</li> </ul>	Horizon 1: Crisis Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify and respond to and mitigate the ripple effects of the crisis, with an emphasis on mitigating the (<b>triage</b>) while adaptively managing critical routine operations</li> <li>Level of effort is considerable: results are real time &amp; emergent, range from proactive to reactive, unpredictable and often high stakes</li> </ul>
Horizon 2: Disruptive Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek to disrupt the systems that hold complex challenges in place through bolder experiments, deliberate pushes to change policies, power structures, public awareness</li> <li>Level of effort is far greater, uncertain and involve tension and risk; results require longer to emerge, are unpredictable, but may be significant</li> </ul>	Horizon 2: Post Disruption Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Track, develop and understand new ideas and practices developed during the crisis that can be employed more readily – and perhaps even help prevent – a future iteration of the crisis</li> <li>Level of effort is modest in the early days of the crisis but gradually increases as the emergency softens and there is more time and receptivity to think about post-crisis recovery; results appear post recovery</li> </ul>
Horizon 3: Transformative Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generate and promote alternative visions of a future world with new ideas learning rich exemplars and widespread engagement.</li> <li>Level of effort and results are typically diffuse, long term and difficult to track; potential pay-off is unpredictable and ranges from nothing to the transformative</li> </ul>	Horizon 3: Post Recovery Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generate and amplify older and new visions and ideas for significant change, build and engage networks, seek and exploit newly opened windows of opportunity</li> <li>Level of efforts and results are mix of fast and slow, diffuse and concentrated, risky and not, yet always unpredictable; results of adopted ideas can be transformative</li> </ul>

What ideas do  
you want to  
inform your  
post-  
Pandemic  
world?

- “Only a crisis - actual or perceived - produces real change. When that crisis occurs, the actions that are taken depend on the ideas that are lying around. That, I believe, is our basic function: to develop alternatives to existing policies, to keep them alive and available until the politically impossible becomes the politically inevitable.”

- — **Milton Friedman**

# Key Framing Points

1. Why change systems?
2. What is a system?
3. What do results in a system change efforts look like?
4. What are the implications of disruptive events?
5. So what are the implications and questions for you work?

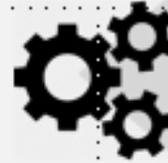
## Group Discussion

So what insights emerge for you regarding your own efforts to track and communicate your efforts change systems?

So what new questions emerge?

### SYSTEMS CHANGE

The extent to which efforts change the systems underlying complex issues.



1. Changes in drivers of system behaviors
2. Changes in behaviors of system actors
3. Changes in overall system behavior(s)

### MISSION OUTCOMES

The extent to which our efforts help to make lives better.



1. Outcomes for individuals
2. Outcomes for targeted geography/groups
3. Outcomes for populations

### STRATEGIC LEARNING

The extent to which efforts uncover insights key to future progress.



1. Learning about what we are doing
2. Learning about how we are thinking
3. Learning about how we are being