

# Evolving Nonprofits for Good



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Propel Nonprofits Strategic Services



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# Gifts of Covid

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Challenged “the way we have always done this”

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Revealed siloes and fostered (or forced) collaboration

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Humility: We learned a lot about what we don’t know

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The goal now is to avoid returning to the status quo without integrating the learning!



# What We Have Tried

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Board  
effectiveness



Better  
fundraising



Social  
entrepreneurship



Foundation-  
favored reforms



Return on  
investment

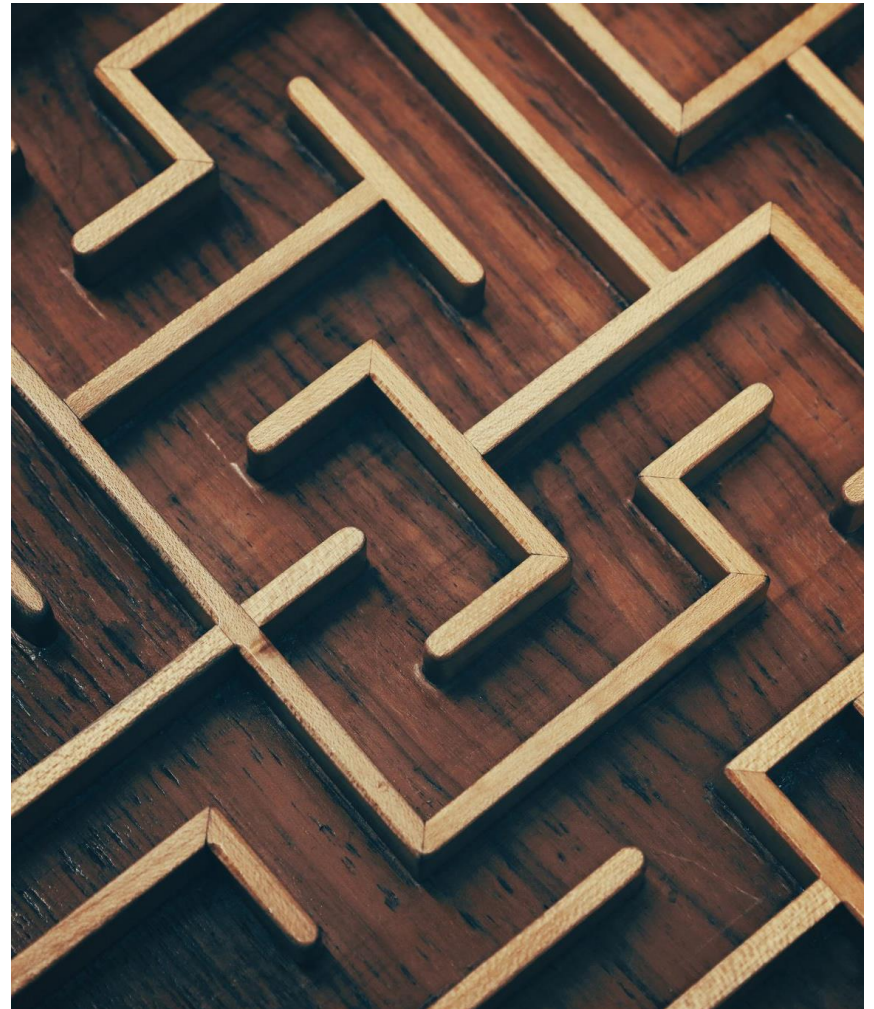
# Why Hasn't It Worked?

Structures were inherited from places of power and privilege- ***the means of achieving the goal cannot be counter to the goal***

Culture of competition, not collaboration

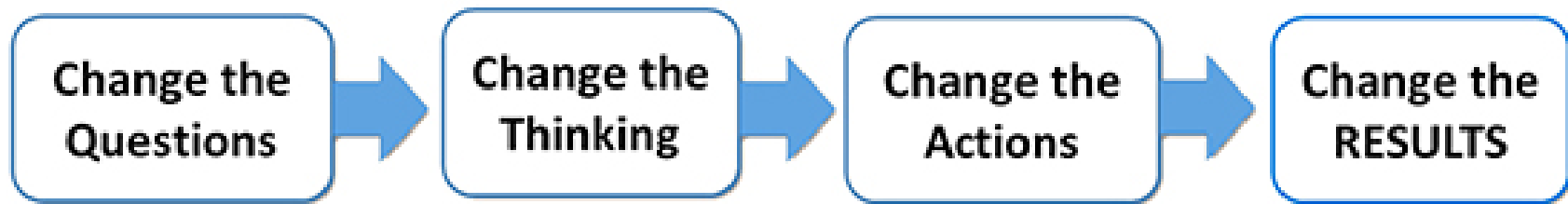
Organizations are at the center, when the “smallest unit of health is the community” (Wendell Berry)

Focus on fixing what is wrong, instead of creating what is right



# A Paradigm Shift for Impact

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Gottlieb, H. Creating a Better World Means Asking Better Questions By Hildy Gottlieb 24 July 2020  
[https://ssir.org/articles/entry/creating\\_a\\_better\\_world\\_means\\_asking\\_better\\_questions](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/creating_a_better_world_means_asking_better_questions)

# Collaborate with Intention and Creativity

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Sector focused capacity building initiatives



Space sharing, staff sharing



Merged organizations



“Care-team” models of programming

*What other types of collaboration are you seeing?*

# 3 Descriptions of Organizations



## Frontline

Frontline organizations who are in the trenches, responding in the moment to make sure we are okay



## Emergent

Organizations who are creating something new: dreaming, and imagining, piloting a new way forward



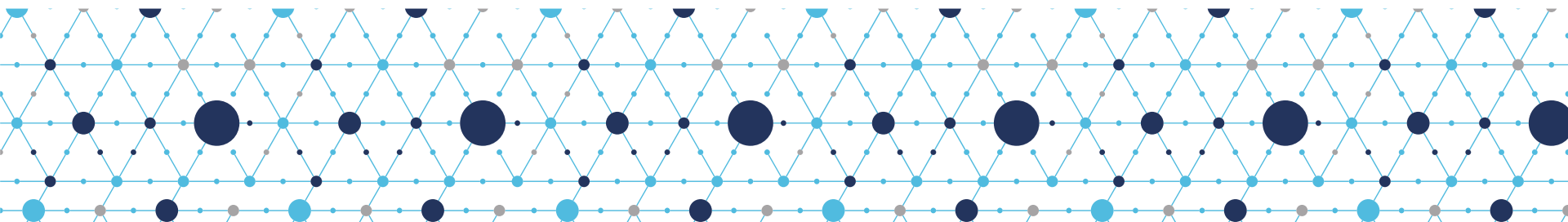
## Evolve or Die

Here now, but may have outlived usefulness, can evolve into something or resource share to create fertile ground for the future

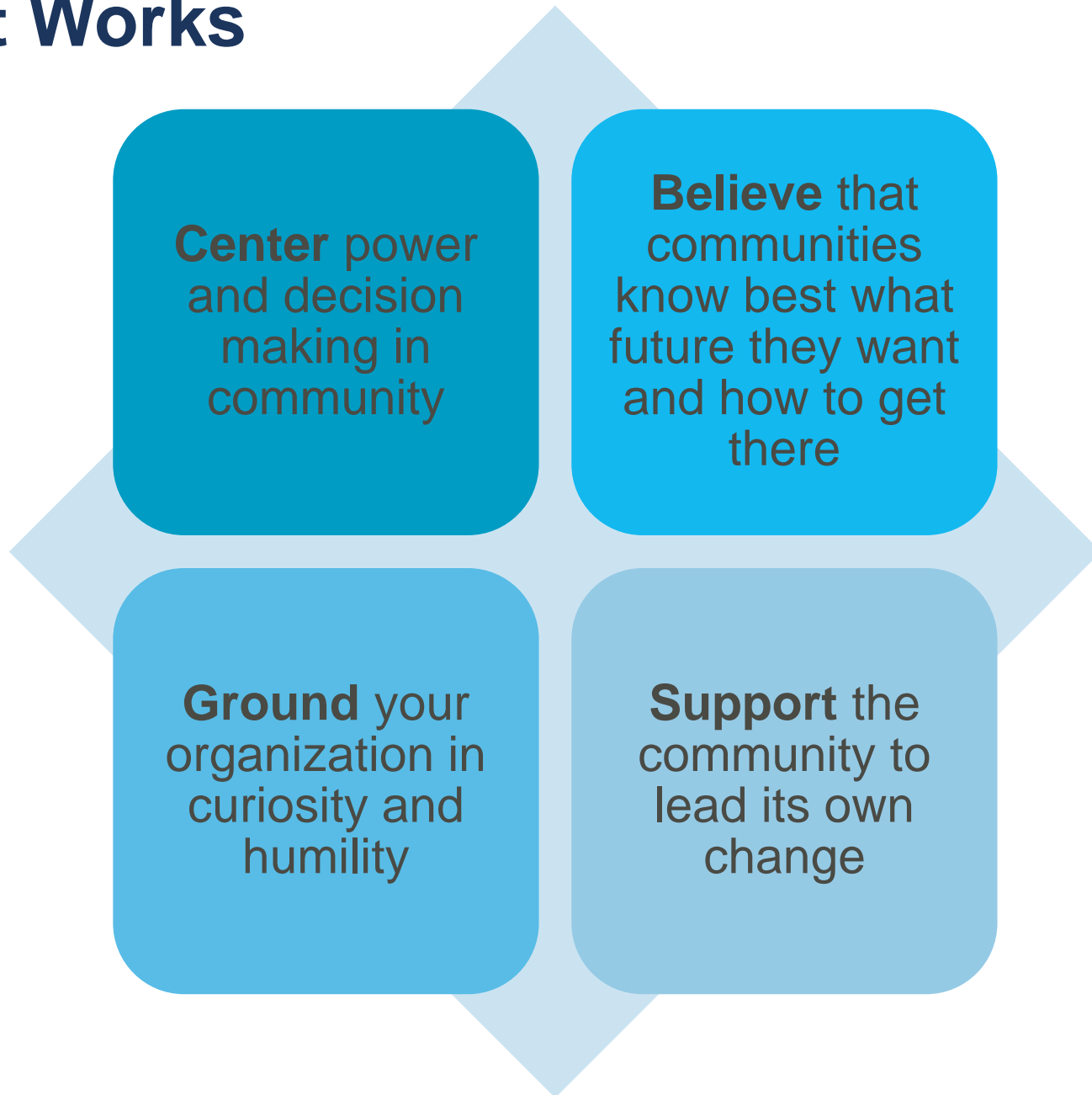


## Discussion

Which of the three seems most reflective of your organization's current state?



# What Works



- We are stewards of community- the foremost accountability is to the people you serve
- Programs and initiatives are designed, and decisions are made by the community- with support, process and resources from the organization
- Boards/employees are the supports to community leaders and those with lived-experience

## Key Question

*What can we accomplish together that we cannot accomplish alone?*

# The Community Knows Best

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- Cultivate the space for more people to be able to dream and build
- Rethink the role of “expert”
- Stay future oriented and strengths based
- Believe that a different future is an achievable goal

## Key Question

*How can we cultivate space for community creativity and dreaming?*

# Ground Your Organization in Curiosity and Humility



- First: Do No Harm.
- Stay grounded in inquiry, listening & learning
- Normalize the flow of ideas, information and resources across your sector
- Use evaluation as a tool for learning

## Key Question

*What are the relationships that will help create change?*



# Support the Community to Lead



- Resourcing social change is different: sharing, relationship, equity, and trust are the primary units of measurement (not only \$)
- Create conditions and provide resources for people to be their best
- Lean into mutual support, shared vision and shared values
- Invest in existing & emerging community leaders

## Key Question

*What might our role be in supporting the change (rather than leading the change)?*

# Things to Ponder

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What can we do together that we cannot do alone?

What might our role in supporting the change, rather than leading the change, be?

How can we engage in this work with love for ourselves and our communities?

# References



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Thank you!

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