Adaptive Leadership
Comprehensive Community Approach
Community Foundations
Leadership Framework

The community foundation is a community partner that creates a better future for all by pursuing the community’s greatest opportunities and addressing the most critical challenges, inclusively uniting people, institutions and resources from throughout the community, and producing significant, widely shared and lasting results.
Community Foundations Leadership Framework

Four preconditions to successfully exercise leadership:

» *Values, culture and will* – built on community-focused results oriented approaches and **willingness to take risk**.

» *Credibility* – built on inclusive, persistent relationship building.

» *Resources* – staffing, information & communications systems, networks, and a revenue model.

» *Understanding and skills* – to recognize and act on trends and policy changes with cultural competency.
Comprehensive Community Development

• Achieving prosperity requires a vision for change which goes beyond solving problems across the interplay of governmental, commercial, and mission-based activities.

• Community developed visions for change that help solve complex problems are only solved by cross-sector strategy — the mutually reinforcing activities collective impact.

• Comprehensive community development is collective impact that builds on the strengths and potential of all parts of a community from empowered individuals to entire sectors.
Comprehensive Community Development
Adaptive Leadership Defined

• Adaptive leadership is the practice of mobilizing people to tackle tough challenges and thrive. The concept of thriving is drawn from evolutionary biology.

• Successful adaptations enable a living system to take the best from its history into the future. Adaptive leadership is specifically about change that enables the capacity to thrive.
Purpose and Possibility

- The challenges that communities face as they position for long-term success are not technical problems with engineered fixes.
- They are adaptive challenges stemming from the interaction of interrelated trends—demographic, economic, social, political, and technological—playing out on the local, national, and global stages.
- Leadership is a practice not a role. Exercising leadership is difficult, risky, politically contentious, and personally gut-wrenching.
Purpose and Possibility

“Leading Boldly” Stanford Social Review, 2004

• Community foundation’s role in social change.
• Moving from authority to leadership, producing greater impact.
• Adaptive problems are difficult to define, have many stakeholders hold a piece of the solution.
• Mobilizing people to clarify what matters most, in what balance, and what trade-offs and defusing conflicts.
Adaptive Leadership Characteristics

• Ecosystem approach
• Adaptive changes build on the past rather than jettison it.
• Adaptation occurs through experimentation.
• Adaptation relies on diversity.
• New adaptations displace, reregulate, and rearrange.
• Adaptation takes time.
Diagnose the System

• *Diagnose Adaptive from Technical Challenges*
• *Diagnose the Political Landscape*
  – Uncovering loyalties and alliances
  – Recognize others’ values motivating actions
  – Assess the losses and risks with potential actions
• *Qualities of an Adaptive Organization (State)*
  – Name elephants in the room
  – Responsibility for the future is shared
  – Independent judgment is expected
  – Leadership capacity is developed
  – Continuous learning is practiced
Diagnose Adaptive Challenges from Technical Challenges

1. **No Known Solution**: There is a gap between the reality and aspiration and you don’t have the skills or knowledge to close.

2. **People Would Rather Avoid the Issue**: Balancing two ideas is not possible; working on the challenge creates tension and conflict.

3. **Reason and Logic Alone Won’t Get You There**: There are competing values at play or there is a gap between what people say and what they do.
Diagnose Adaptive Challenges from Technical Challenges

4. **Recurring Problem**: Challenge reappears after fix is applied.

5. **Emotional Response**: Working on this challenge makes people feel uncomfortable; they experience an emotional response such as a feeling in their gut or a knot in a muscle.

6. **Failure to Resolve Competing Priorities**: You are being asked to do more with less instead of making tough trade offs.
Diagnose Adaptive Challenges from Technical Challenges


8. *Casualties*: To move forward, some people may be left behind.

9. *People Must Work Across Boundaries*: No one person or group can fix the problem alone.

10. *Progress Is Not Linear*: No direct path to get to a better outcome; trial and error is necessary.
# Diagnose Adaptive Challenges from Technical Challenges

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kind of Work</th>
<th>Problem &amp; Solution Definition</th>
<th>Locus of Work</th>
<th>Type of Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>TECHNICAL</td>
<td>CLEAR Set &amp; cast arm</td>
<td>AUTHORITY Doctor</td>
<td>OPTIMIZE EXECUTION Set and cast arm as efficiently and comfortably as possible</td>
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<tr>
<td>TECHNICAL &amp; ADAPTIVE</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADAPTIVE</td>
<td>REQUIRES LEARNING Loss of independence: learning new ways of living</td>
<td>STAKEHOLDERS Multiple stakeholders: family members, friends, doctors</td>
<td>EXPERIMENTS &amp; SMART RISKS e.g. Experiment with small changes—start with not driving at night</td>
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*Strengthening our communities.*
Mobilize the System

• Make Interpretations
  – Think adaptive first not technical
  – Systemic rather than individual
  – Engage with conflict created

• Design Effective Interventions
  – Thoughtful framing
  – Appeal to individual values
  – Listen well, embrace resistance, do not settle for avoidance
Mobilize the System

• **Act Politically**
  – You will always have allies and adversaries
  – Manage factions
  – Engage voices of dissent

• **Orchestrate Conflict**
  – Conflict is an essential resource toward change

• **Build an Adaptive Culture**
  – Model adaptive leadership
See Yourself as a System

You are a system as complex as the one you are trying to move forward.

- MARTY LINSKY

• **Identify Your Loyalties**
  – Workplace
  – Community
  – Ancestors

• **Know Your Tuning (Enneagram)**

• **Broaden Your Bandwidth**
  – Dancing on the edge of your authorizing environment

• **Understand Your Roles**
Deploy Yourself

• Stay Connected to Your Purposes
  – Personal Goals
  – Common Pitfalls (Martyrdom, Self-Righteousness)

• Engage Courageously
  – Everyone feels incompetent
  – Everyone makes mistakes

• Inspire People
  – Listen with compassion
  – Heartfelt talk
Deploy Yourself

• Run Experiments
  – Exceed your authority
  – Turn up the heat
  – Name your piece of the mess
  – Display your own incompetence

• Thrive (Maintain Leadership Abilities)
  – Maintain personal networks
  – Identify confidants
  – Life is not work
  – Optimism for the future
# Deploy Yourself: Crucial Conversations

## 1. Role Setting
**Who am I in this conversation?**
- What "hat" am I wearing, e.g. co-worker, committee liaison, subordinate, confidant, etc.?
- Initial framing to get the person's attention

## 2. Confronting Conflict
**What is the conflict about?**
- Express a point-of-view, position, problem, concern or wish and elicit the opposing perspective
- Clarify what the conflict is that's standing in the way

## 3. Diagnostic Inquiry
**What's behind the conflict?**
- What is most important to the person?
- What losses are they trying to protect themselves against?
- How do they see you as part of the problem?
- What is their understanding of what you're looking for?

## 4. Adaptive Ask
**What specific action do you want from them?**
**Make an “ask”. Examples:**
- Trading off a second-order priority in order to get more of a first-order one
- Putting themselves or their issue at risk
- Taking a loss, e.g. getting reassigned to another project, using resources for something other than what they planned
- Changing their behavior with another employee
Discussion Questions

• What are some of the most adaptive organizations, communities or people you have seen or read about?
• In your view, what makes them adaptive?
• What types of resistance to change have you seen in yourself or in others? Why do you think that people want to maintain the status quo?
• Think of when you experienced a change initiative in your past. What pain, distress or conflict did you witness or experience during the change process?