

# Creating Strategic Organizations

The background of the slide is a vibrant blue abstract design. It features numerous thin, curved lines that create a sense of motion and depth, resembling light trails or data paths. Interspersed among these lines are various sized bokeh lights, some appearing as soft, out-of-focus circles and others as sharper points of light. The overall effect is dynamic and futuristic, suggesting themes of technology, innovation, and forward-thinking.

## TODAY'S OBJECTIVES

- ✓ Understand five key elements of a strategic organization
- ✓ Practice articulating your organization's intended impact
- ✓ Explore how organizational culture and power dynamics influence organizational strategy

# Elements of Strategic Organizations

Clarifying CORE

Sensing CONTEXT

Inspiring CHANGE

Cultivating CULTURE

Aligning CHOICES

## EXERCISE: REFLECTED BEST ORGANIZATION

Think of a time when your organization was at its best. Jot down as many details as possible.



- ✓ What happened?
- ✓ Who else was there?
- ✓ Why does that particular experience come to mind?

## EXERCISE: REFLECTED BEST ORGANIZATION

Connect with a partner, share your reflection and discuss:

- ✓ What *strengths* were you activating as an organization?
- ✓ What *organizational values* were being expressed?
- ✓ What does this experience tell you about what is *distinctive or unique* about your organization's approach to the work?
- ✓ What crucial *resources* were you drawing upon?

## EXERCISE: REFLECTED BEST ORGANIZATION





# EXERCISE: REFLECTED BEST ORGANIZATION



# Theory of Change as Strategic Framework

*A theory of change* is a way to visually represent an organization's thinking about how it contributes to desired changes in the world.

Inspiring CHANGE

Clarity of intended impact

Sensing CONTEXT

Problem analysis,  
Focus of our efforts

Clarifying CORE

Core values, distinctive approach



VALUES

EQUITY: We pursue a just distribution of opportunities and resources.  
 RACIAL JUSTICE: We work to dismantle racial inequities and oppression at the interpersonal, organizational, and systemic levels.  
 MULTICULTURALISM: We value and engage the perspective and experience of diverse communities.  
 INTEGRITY: We hold ourselves accountable, claiming and learning from both successes and failures.  
 RELEVANCE: We design content and experiences that resonate with our clients.  
 LEARNING: We experiment, continuously questioning our assumptions and adapting.  
 PARTNERSHIP: We stand shoulder to shoulder with our clients, partners, and funders.  
 HUMOR: We laugh together to build connections and community that forward the work.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

Our fight for social justice is held back by systemic, structural, and interpersonal oppression.

STANCES

Leadership is a process, not a position.  
 A focus on strengths unlocks more powerful possibilities.  
 Leadership development and capacity building efforts must include a power and privilege analysis.  
 Change doesn't take root without attending to skills, systems, and culture in concert.  
 Impact and financial health are intrinsically linked.

FOCUS

Leaders, organizations, and movement networks committed to social justice.

STRATEGIES

We create exceptional and transformational learning experiences.  
 We approach leadership, management, and strategy holistically.  
 We use a mix of facilitation, teaching, coaching, peer learning, consulting, physical practice, and design thinking.  
 We continuously evolve our content based on our own experiences, our work with clients, and research in the field.  
 We form project teams that bring together different strengths and perspectives.  
 We nurture partnerships that complement our expertise and deepen our relevance and understanding.  
 We use our national platform to research and highlight emerging practices.

ANTICIPATED CHANGES

A powerful and resilient critical mass of diverse leaders at all levels.  
 Organizations are strong and adaptive.  
 Movement leaders are in strong relationship and build aligned strategies.  
 Leaders, organizations, and movements embrace practices of reflection and well-being for long-term sustainability.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

The dismantling of systems, structures, and practices that perpetuate oppression.  
 The deep and true valuing of marginalized communities, bringing our experiences and lives from the margins to the center.

# Theory of Change as Strategic Framework

Sensing CONTEXT

Problem analysis

## Why name the problem?

- ✓ Problems are dynamic and change over time – both as the conditions around us change, and as our understanding of the issues change
- ✓ Having a shared analysis of the problem helps focus our efforts
- ✓ Clearly articulated, compelling problems can be motivating and inspire people to collective action

# Theory of Change as Strategic Framework

Sensing CONTEXT

Problem analysis

## EXERCISE: DRAFT PROBLEM STATEMENTS

Problem statement defined:

*A concise and compelling  
description of the conditions  
we aim to change.*

# Theory of Change as Strategic Framework

Inspiring CHANGE

Clarity of  
intended impact

## Intended Impact Statements

- ✓ Answer the question, “We will know we are successful when...”
- ✓ Respond directly to the problem we aim to address, as we have articulated it.
- ✓ Represent our organizational commitment to a specific set of positive changes we aim to realize in the community, field, or movement.

# Theory of Change as Strategic Framework

Inspiring CHANGE

Clarity of  
intended impact

## EXERCISE: DRAFT IMPACT STATEMENTS

Impact statement defined:

*Specific, observable changes  
that indicate the problem  
is being resolved.*

## Focus of Change and Organizational Strategy

In a *theory of change* process we “backward map” – starting with an analysis of the problem and a commitment to specific impact, and then confirming organizational focus and strategy.

Sensing CONTEXT

Where will we focus our efforts and resources?

Clarifying CORE

What distinctive, cross-cutting approaches do we employ?



## Focus of Change and Organizational Strategy

In other words,

**WHO DO WE NEED TO BE**

to contribute toward this change in the world?

Sensing **CONTEXT**

Where will we focus our efforts and resources?

Clarifying **CORE**

What distinctive, cross-cutting approaches do we employ?

## Strategic people, not strategic plans



**“Participation is not a choice.**  
We have no choice but to invite people into the process of rethinking, redesigning, restructuring the organization. We ignore people's need to participate at our own peril. If they're involved, they will create a future that already has them in it.”

Bringing Life to Organizational Change  
*Journal for Strategic Performance Measurement*, April/May 1998  
Margaret Wheatley (left) and Myron Kellner-Rogers

# Elements of Strategic Organizations

## Aligning CHOICES

## Cultivating CULTURE

- ✓ Nurturing a practice of strategic thinking that includes reflection and decision making
- ✓ Inspiring and mobilizing others to act based on a shared understanding of the current context
- ✓ Recognizing and leveraging constructive power

# Reflection and Next Steps

