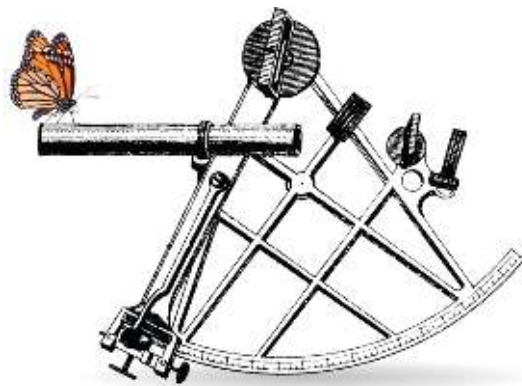




The Ecology for Inter-Agency Collaboration

AASCF & Services For Children And
Families

Edmonton, February 8, 2012



Here to There

Mark Cabaj
9540-145 Street
Edmonton, Alberta, CA
T5N 2W8
P: 780-451-8984
F: 78-447-4246
E: Mark@here2there.ca

Outline

- Context
- Part 1: Collaboration 101
- Part 2: Three Factors
 - Factor
 - Agency/Field-Building Strategies
 - Discussion
- Part 3: A Tipping Point?
- Reflections
- Close



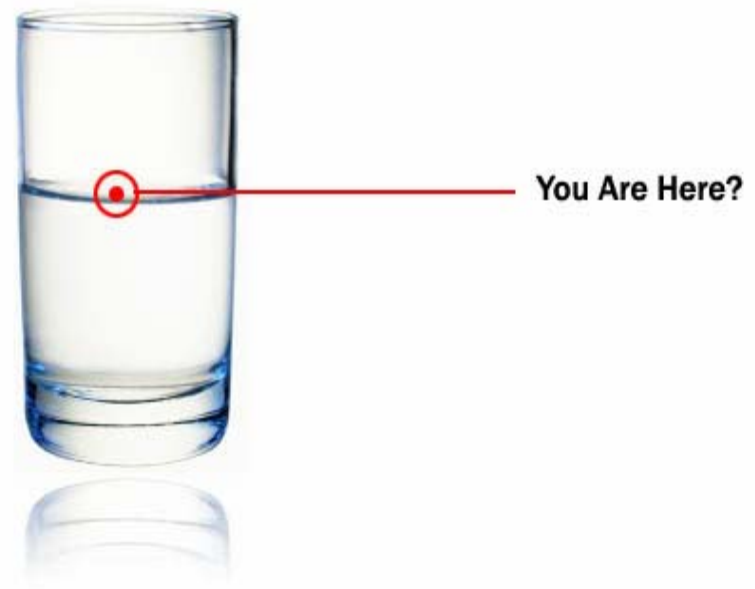
Spirit of the Day

- We don't do pessimism. We don't do optimism. We do realism.

Mark Carney, Governor of The Bank of Canada, on the Bank's Approach to Fiscal Policy

- I am not half-full or half-empty; I want to know how much water is in the glass!

Participant at Tamarack Workshop on Evaluation



Connect With Each Other

- Why is it important to you that you are here today?



Part 1:

Collaboration 101

1. Defining Collaboration
2. The case for & against collaboration
3. Typical areas for collaboration
4. The collaboration continuum
5. The evidence on inter-agency collaboration

The Collaboration Paradox

“The urge to form partnerships, to link up in collaborative arrangement, is perhaps the oldest, strongest, and most fundamental force in nature. There are no solitary, free-living creatures: every form of life is dependent on other forms”

Thomas 1980

Collaboration is really a hard nut to crack.



*Dr. Bob Lonne, Edmonton,
November 16, 2011*

Definition

“ relationships that range from loose and informal cooperative working relationships between two or more organisations at one end of a continuum, through to more formal structural arrangements such as mergers between two or more organisations at the other end, all with the aim of achieving commonly agreed goals”.

- Latin: co'labore: to strive or work together.



Hall 2010

The Case for & Against

- Access new clients, revenues, technology
- Larger reach
- Greater ingenuity
- Reduced duplications
- Increased legitimacy & clout
- Time, energy intensive
- Risk to reputation
- Loss of power (imbalance)
- Unpredictable pace and results

HIGH REWARD



HIGH EFFORT
& HIGH RISK

Typical Areas of Inter-Agency Collaboration

Administration

- Internal activities related to agency operations (e.g. record keeping, fundraising, management information systems, accounting, etc.). No direct interaction with clients.

Communications

- External activities related to communicating to others outside of the group (e.g. policy statements, media relations, promotional efforts).

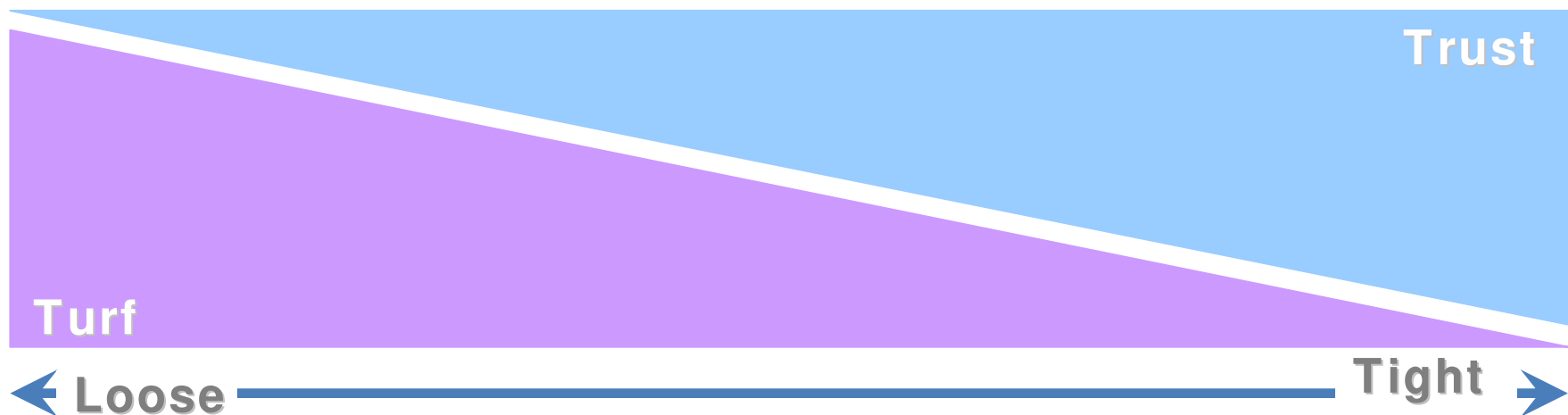
Service Delivery

- Activities related to serving clients (e.g. intake, referral, case management, etc.).

The Continuum

High Intensity

Compete	Co-exist	Communicate	Cooperate	Coordinate	Collaborate	Integrate
Competition for clients, resources, partners, public attention.	No systematic connection between agencies.	Inter-agency information sharing (e.g. networking).	As needed, often informal, interaction, on discrete activities or projects.	Organizations systematically adjust and align work with each other for greater outcomes.	Longer term interaction based on shared mission, goals; shared decision-makers and resources.	Fully integrated programs, planning, funding.



Evidence on Collaboration

Bob Lonne (2011)

- *While the vision and rationale for joint work between specialist groups are powerful, there is yet insufficient evidence to argue that greater collaboration between services will necessarily produce better outcomes for all children and families”.*

(Gardiner 2003)

Schorr (1996), O’Cooner and Roberts (2005)

- Administration: Some evidence that leads to great organizational efficiency.
- Communication: Little research on effectiveness.
- Service Delivery: can yield better outcomes in some instances; emphasis on flexible (rather than only “integrated”) services.

Patterns of Service Effectiveness

- offering a broad spectrum of services;
- regularly crossing traditional professional and bureaucratic boundaries, i.e., organizational flexibility;
- seeing the child in the context of family and the family in the context of its surroundings, i.e., holistic approaches;
- coherent and easy-to-use services;
- committed, caring, results-oriented staff;
- finding ways to adapt or circumvent traditional professional and bureaucratic limitations to meet client needs;
- professionals redefining their roles to respond to severe needs; and
- overall, intensive, comprehensives, responsive and flexible programming.

A Summary

- “Tight” collaboration if necessary, but not necessarily “tight” collaboration. The key is to create the culture and capacity to work tightly or loosely as required by any given situation.

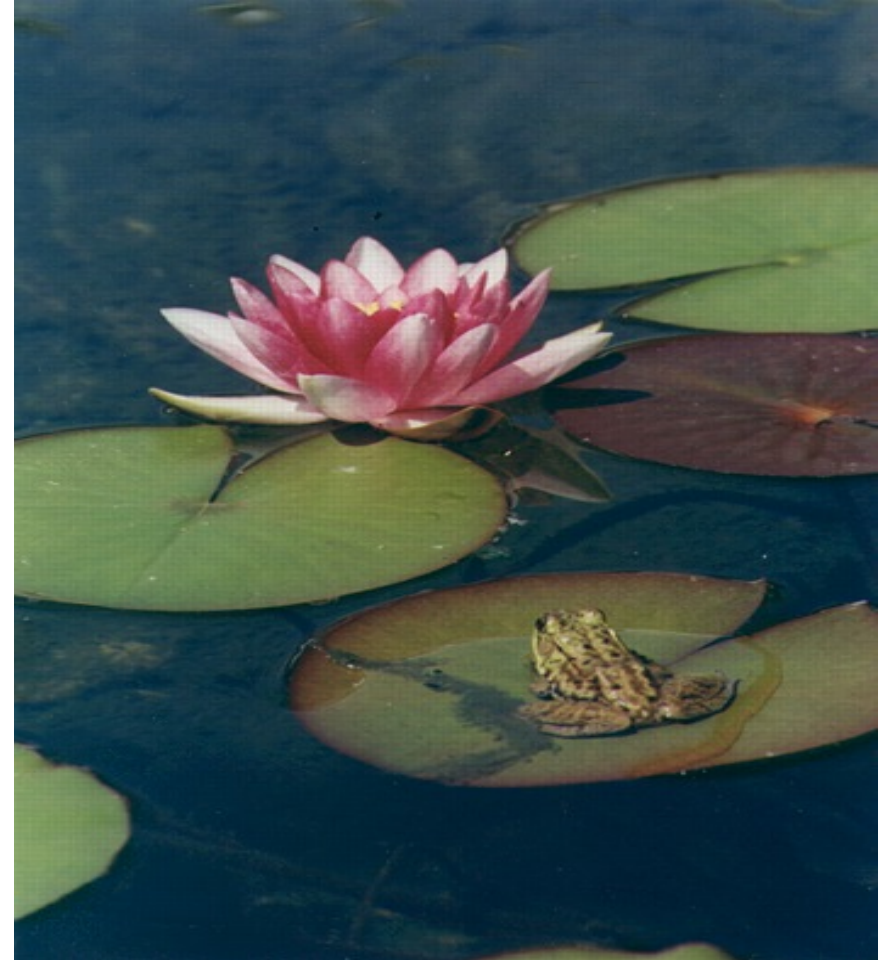
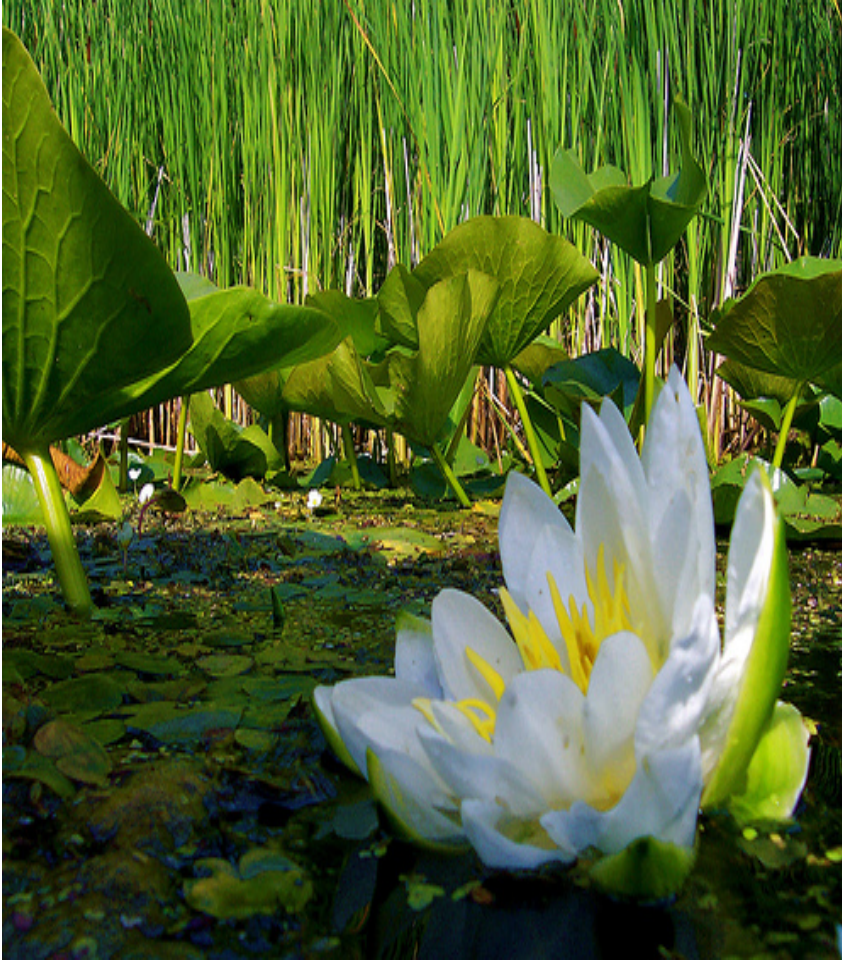


Part 2:

The Ecology for Inter- agency Collaboration

- What are some of the “systemic” factors that shape the incidence, effectiveness and durability of inter-agency collaboration?

Metaphor: Frog in the Marsh





Challenge 1

Inadequate Resources for Core Activities

The Main Idea

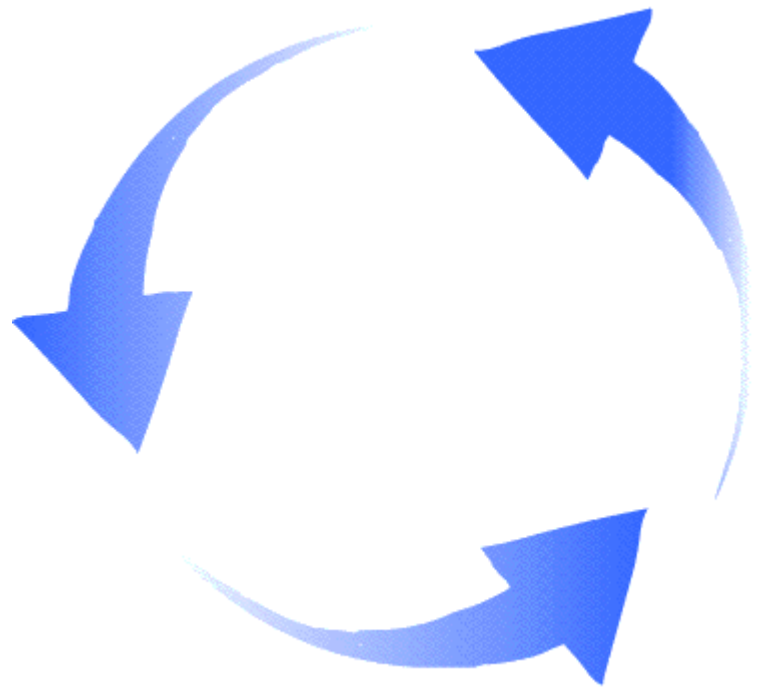
- Collaboration requires resources above and beyond those required for front-line activities to cover networking, administration, and coordination.
- Many non-profits struggle to cover the “overhead” or infrastructure required for their direct work, never mind collaboration.
- This weakens the incidence, effectiveness and durability of inter-agency collaboration.

Systematic Underfunding

- In the for-profit world, overhead averages about 25 percent of sales. But large non-profits report an average rate of only 18 percent.
- Nonprofits often under-invest in critical functions such as IT, accounting and marketing, and shape their financial reports and literature so as to appear as lean as possible. That's because they know that many donors take a dim view of supporting what are considered back-office operations.
- Indeed, a recent survey shows that 43 percent of Americans believe it's reasonable for nonprofits to spend less than 20 cents of each donated dollar on overhead

The Non-Profit Starvation Cycle

- A vicious cycle is leaving nonprofits so hungry for decent infrastructure that they can barely function as organizations—let alone serve their beneficiaries. The cycle starts with funders' unrealistic expectations about how much running a nonprofit costs, and results in nonprofits' misrepresenting their costs while skimping on vital systems—acts that feed funders' skewed beliefs



The Non Profit Starvation Cycle



Strategies

Agency Strategies

- Full cost accounting: track and report full costs of activities.
- Share with funders the extent to which agencies are (a) subsidizing contracts and/or (b) weak overheads.

Field Building Strategies

- Raise public and funder awareness about the perils of underfunding non-profits.
- Create a “Use of Funds” standard that sets standards for appropriate investment in core infrastructure describes (See Charities Review Council in the USA).

References

- Bedsworth, William. Goggins Gregory, Ann and Howard, Don. 2008. Nonprofit Overhead Costs: Breaking the Vicious Cycle of Misleading Reporting, Unrealistic Expectations, and Pressure to Conform. **Stanford Social Innovation Review**.
- Don Howard, Don. Goggins Gregory, Ann. 2008 **Don't Compromise "Good Overhead" (Even in Tough Times)**.
- Gregory, Ann Goggins and Don Howard. 2009. The Non-Profit Starvation Cycle. **Stanford Social Innovation Review**. Fall.
- Silverman, Les and Lynn Taliento. 2006. What Business Execs Don't Know – But Should – About Non-Profits. **Stanford Social Innovation Review**. Summer.

Small Group Discussion

- To what extent is your organization experiencing/complicit in the non-profit starvation cycle?
- What would you add or change to the agency strategies? Field-building strategies?





Challenge 2

Competitive Contracting and Tendering

Paradox and Dilemma

- The Paradoxical Message: “We would like you to work together more closely but you need to compete for funding”.
- Agencies that may one day need to compete with each other are less likely to fully share all their “trade secrets”, open their books, and expose their weaknesses with each other.

Strategies

Agency Strategy

- Collaborate in clusters of agencies and then compete with other clusters

Field Building Strategy

- Encourage funders to be highly selective about if/when they use competitive tendering: e.g. be careful when dealing with complex needs.

References

- Hossli, Walter. 2006. **Competition in the Voluntary Sector: The Case of Community Based Trainers in Alberta.** Edmonton, AB: The Muttart Foundation.
- Phillips, Susan and Levasseur, Karine. 2004. The Snakes and Ladders of Accountability: Contradictions Between Contracting and Collaboration for Canada's Voluntary Sector. **Canadian Public Administration.** Volume 47, Issue 4: 451-474.

Small Group Discussion

- To what degree have you experienced (or witnessed) the tension between collaboration and competition?
- What would you add or change to the agency strategies? Field-building strategies?





Challenge 3:

Categorical Funding Sources,
Eligibility and Design

The Main Idea

- Agencies operate in a landscape of a very diverse array of distinct programs, services and funding sources.
- Agencies are asked to “integrate” and “coordinate” this systemic fragmentation at the point of delivery.
- Agencies serious about trying to do so:
 - Experience high transaction costs to find, secure, administer and account for different resources.
 - Struggle to weaver together different programs with strict eligibility requirements and compliance protocols (the more “rigid” the requirements and protocol, the more they struggle).

History of Service Integration



- Since 1971 there have been about two-dozen major federal initiatives aimed at service integration. The National Governors' Association catalogued 50 service integration projects in forty states just in the one domain of promoting family self-sufficiency.
- Professional organizations, consultants, and federal agencies issued guidebooks and manuals, foundations required local projects to provide evidence of coordination, and new organizations were formed to encourage service integration, both within and across categorical systems. Local service providers complained increasingly of spending all their time at meetings to integrate services.

History of Service Integration

Continued



- But very little changed in the face of the multiplicity of regulations and incompatible eligibility requirements, the professionalized, specialized, and bureaucratized mind-sets of program managers, and the limited funding and influence available to those trying to bring about integration.
- Federally funded service integration efforts became ever more modest, but the barriers to providing coherent services grew. Each wave of reform had to contend with a more complex, inflexible, and fragmented human services system and the cumulative disillusionment resulting from previous failures.

Fragmentation Struggles for Funders

Funders

- In a survey of 1200 foundations in the United States, 80% reported that they required grantees to have collaborative funding arrangements, yet less than one-half had reported having ONE collaborative funding arrangement in the last three years.



Emerging Funding Responses

- Funder coordination – funders seek to co-fund programs and services that cross funding boundaries.
- Pooling – funders pool their funds into one pool and manage it as a master contract. May be called “braided” funding.
- Decategorization – removing, reducing, aligning requirements and regulations. Funds are “blended” into one funding stream.



Emerging Governance/Management Response

- For some time now, public service managers have recognized that working across organizational boundaries is basic to much of what they do. Simply stated, horizontal management is necessary in more and more cases in order to get the job done. Without this type of collaboration, it is difficult to imagine management of cross cutting policy issues or the delivery of services to people in ways that make sense to them.
- There is a feeling, however, that managing horizontally is at a pioneering stage. Too often, it depends on a heroic individual effort. Too frequently, it seems that manager must overcome obstacles that the “system” could reduce or eliminate. Our knowledge still has too many gaps. What we know collectively is still too difficult to assess.

Strategies

Agency Strategy

- Develop high trust relationships with agencies within your domain to ensure that you can work creatively within a fragmented and (sometimes) rigid categorical landscape.

Field Building Strategy

- Experiment with Outcomes-Based Service Delivery
- Encourage expansion of “coordinated”, “braided”, and “blended” funding for agencies.
- Encourage funders and policy makers to develop horizontal governance arrangements.

References: Funding

- Kaplan, Sheila. 2004. Foundations' Double Standard: How Funders Flout Their Own Rules. **Stanford Innovation Review**. Winter.
- The Finance Project. 2003. **Blending and Braiding Funds to Support Early Care and Education Initiatives**. Financing Strategy Series. New York, NY.
- Smith, Anne. 2003. **The Dance: Seeking, Administering and Accounting for Funding in the Voluntary Sector**. Edmonton, AB: The Muttart Foundation.

References: Categorical Programs/Policies

- Schorr, Lisbeth. 1998. **Community Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America**. New York, NY: Anchor Books.
- <http://lisbethschorr.org/doc/CommonPurposetableofcontents.pdf>
- Moving from the Heroic to the Everyday: Lessons Learned from Leading Horizontal Projects. Canadian Center for Management Development.

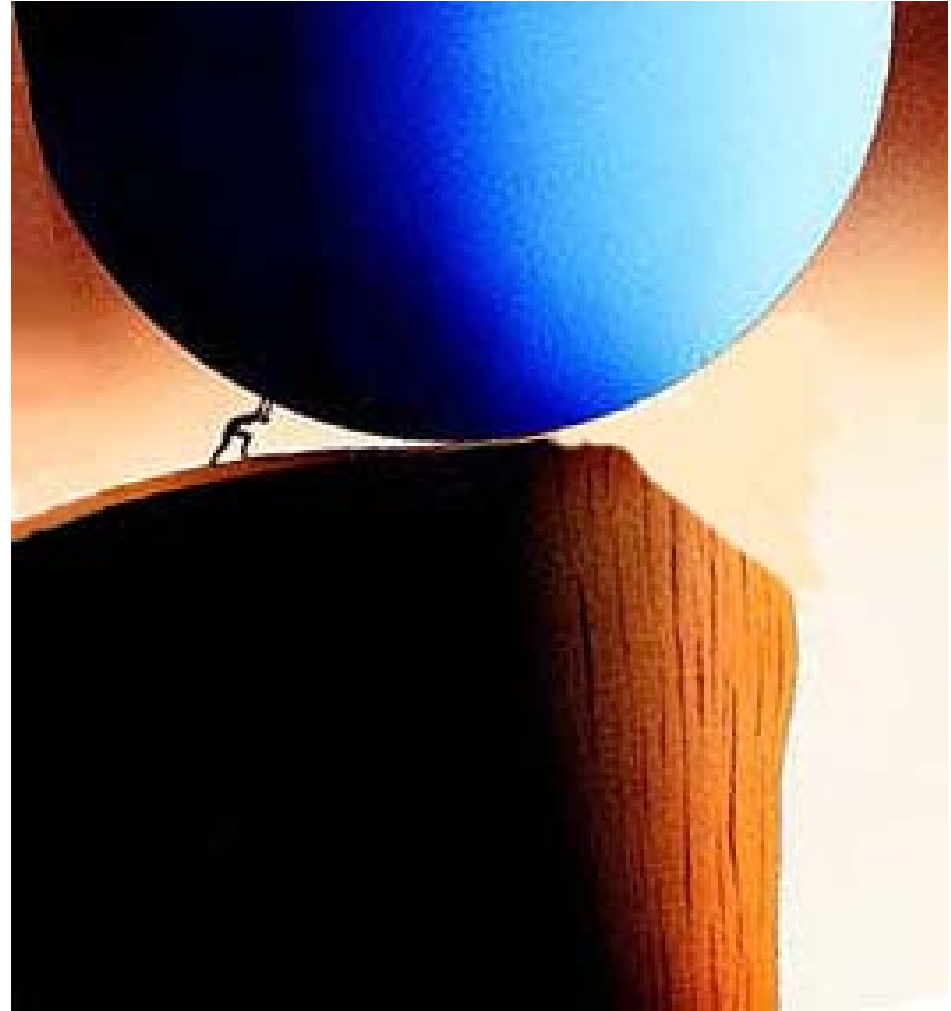
Small Group Discussion

- To what degree have you experienced (or witnessed) the challenge of fragmented and categorical funding?
- What would you add or change to the agency strategies? Field-building strategies?



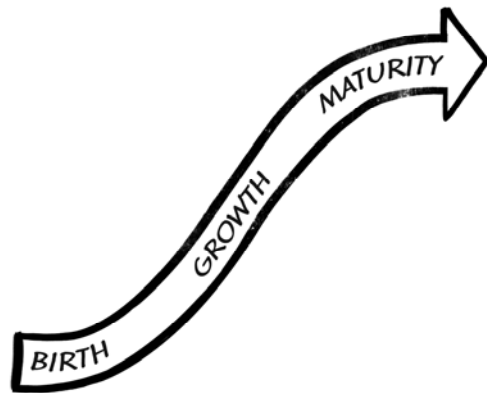
Part 3:

A Tipping Point?

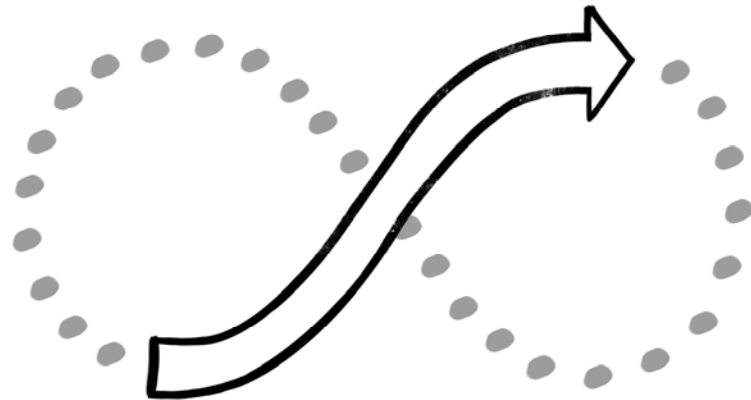


Re-thinking Organizations

The Performance Loop

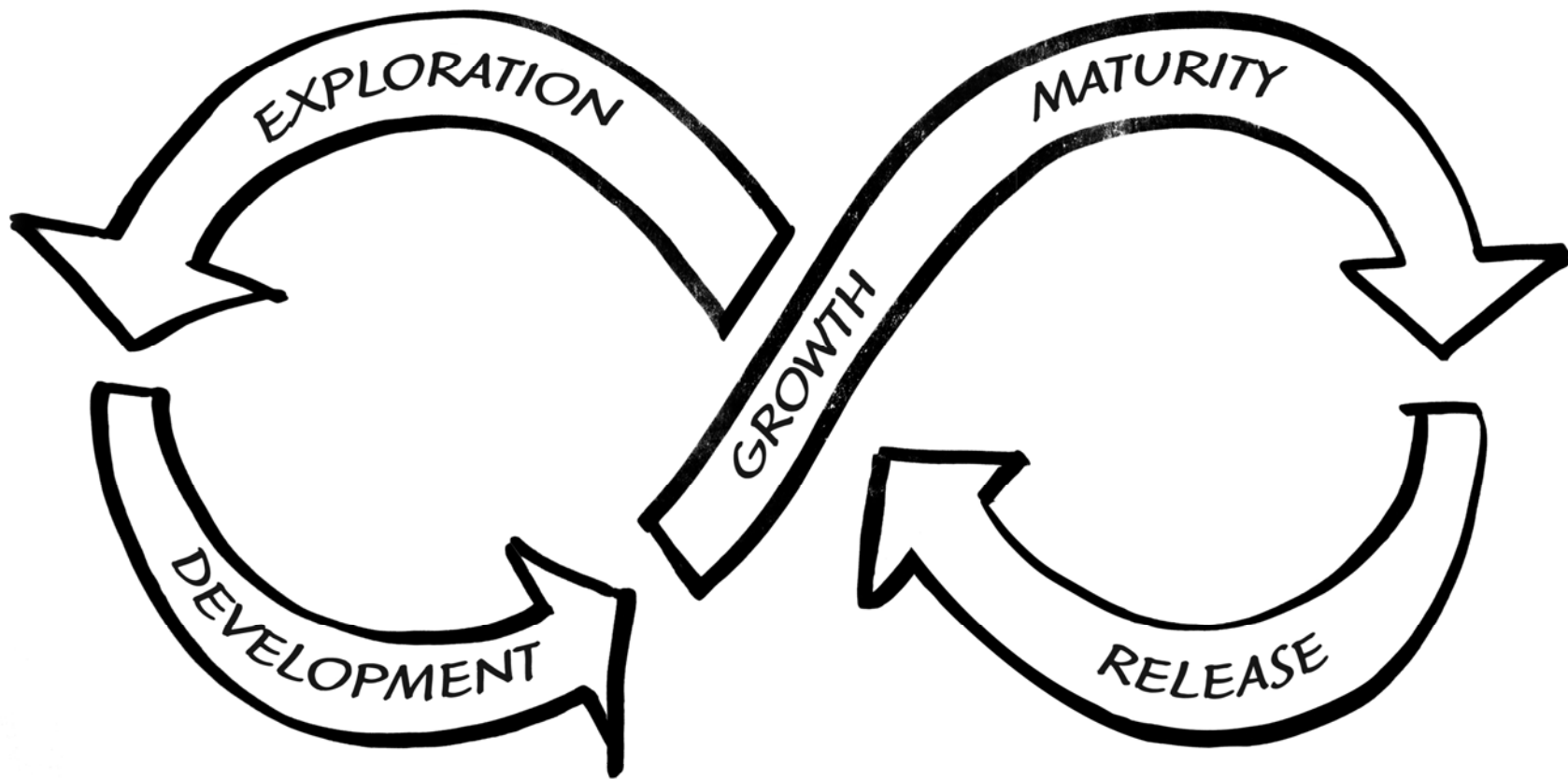


The Renewal Loop

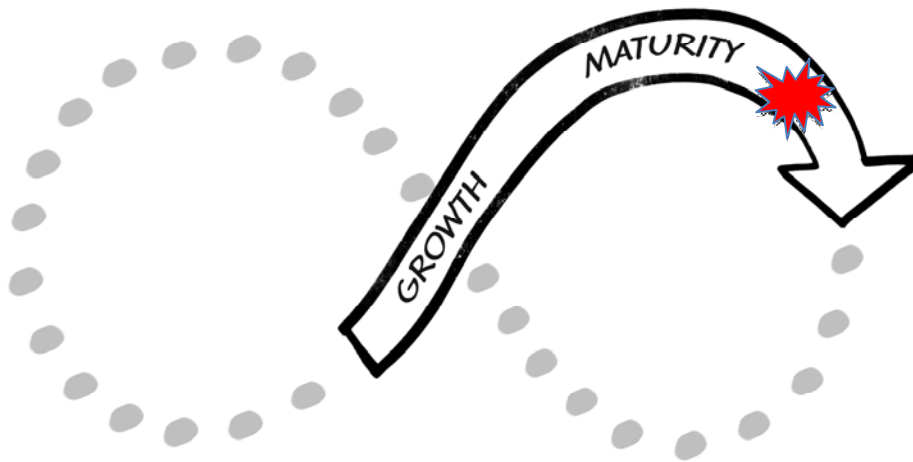


Source: http://www.plexusinstitute.org/edgeware/archive/think/main_aides9.html

The Eco-Cycle of Change



Responses to a declining ROI ...

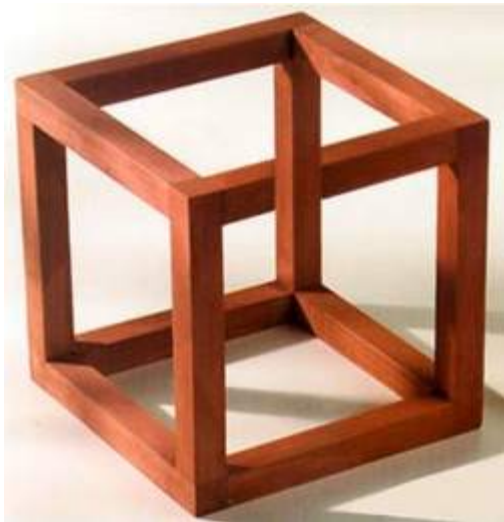


Responses

1. Incremental Innovation
2. Work harder
3. Seek new resources
4. Excessive accountability measures

The Renewal Paradox

- It is often easier to await the manifest failure of the existing patterns and approaches before beginning the renewal process - even though it may mean the eventual renewal process is more fragile and less robust.

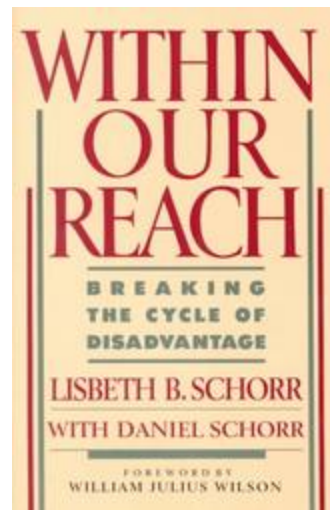
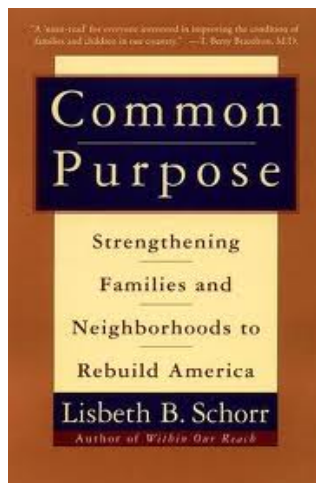
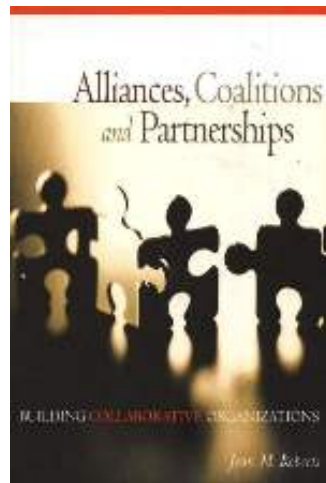


The Innovators Dilemma

- Whether/how to “let go” of the current approach **without being precisely clear about** the substance, strengths and weaknesses of the **alternatives**.



Collaboration Resources



Reflection: Think, Pair, Share



- *What 'aha's' – if any - did you have today?*
- *What new questions – if any emerge for you?*
- *What's one thing that you think you might do differently in your work?*

The Ecology for Inter-Agency Collaboration

