

OPPORTUNITY FOR ALL
EDREDESIGN
THE EDUCATION REDESIGN LAB



Building and Maintaining a Sustainable Backbone

*Kseniya Benderskaya, Manager of Working Cities Challenge,
Federal Reserve Bank of Boston*

#ByAllMeansHGSE 



working cities
challenge

Kseniya Benderskaya, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston
May 21, 2019

www.BostonFed.org/WorkingCities

What is the Working Cities Challenge?



A partnership between State Government, Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, private sector, philanthropy & communities



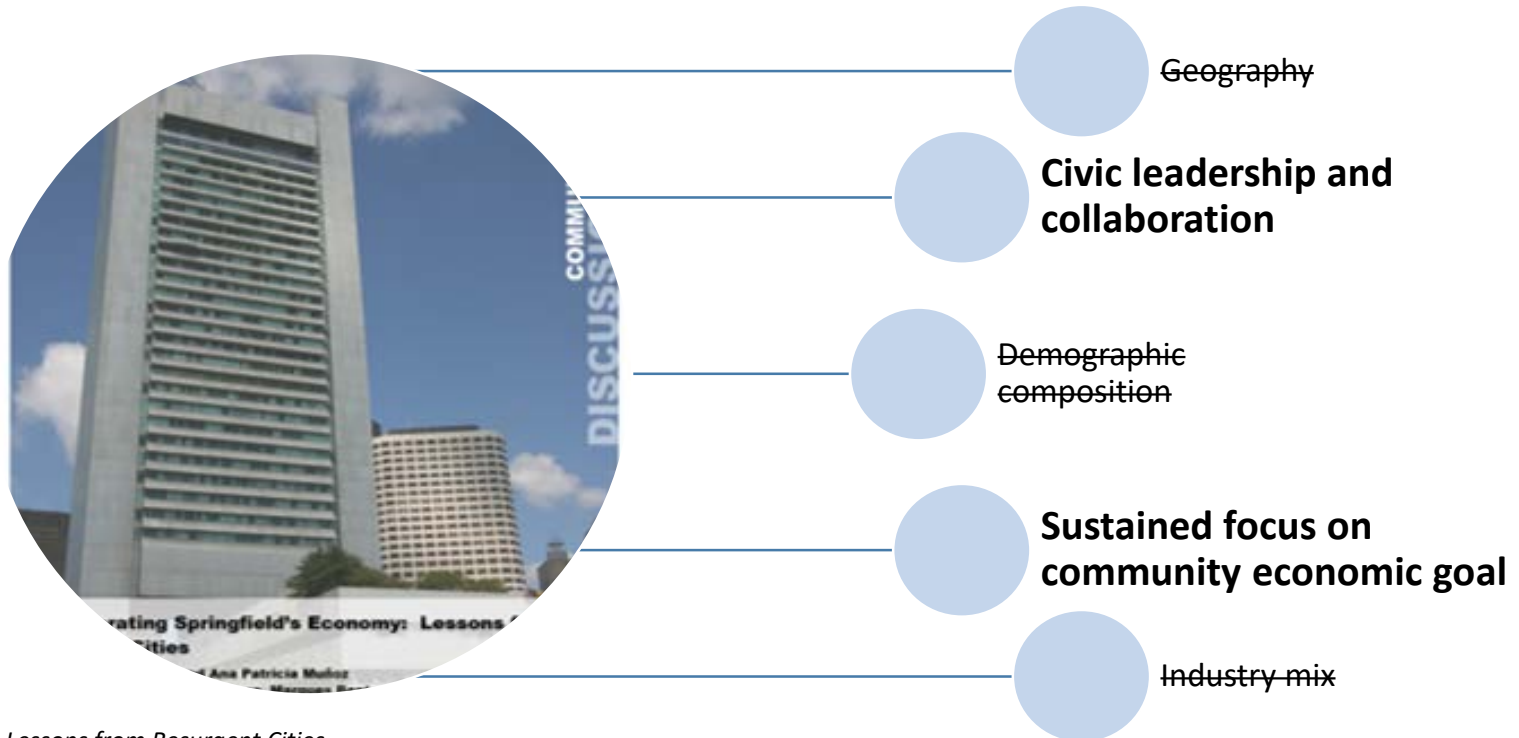
A 3-year funding competition to support strong local leadership teams that are advancing a shared vision for strong economies and vibrant communities



Special focus on inclusion of communities and residents with low- and moderate-incomes; 16 winning cities across New England (MA, RI, CT), expanding into Northern New England with rural model.

What Makes a Difference?

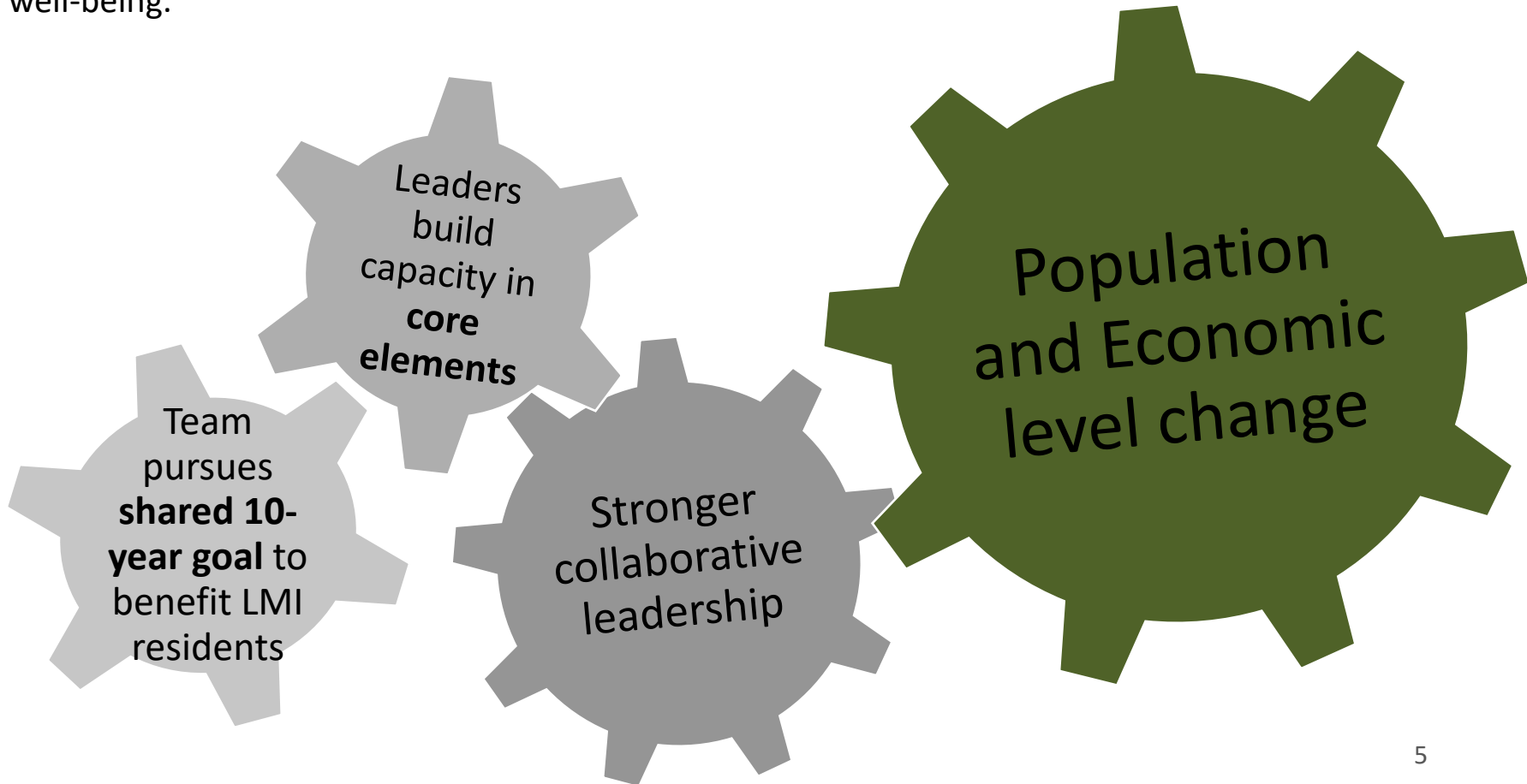
Research by the Boston Fed identifies common drivers **for small- and mid-size post industrial** communities to achieve economic resurgence



Lessons from Resurgent Cities
Kodrzycki and Muñoz, 2009

WCC Theory of Change


A community's leaders, organizations, & residents mobilize to respond to an economic growth challenge or opportunity through the core elements of **collaborative leadership, community engagement, systems change, learning orientation**. This builds economic opportunity and leads to change in resident well-being.



The WCC Model

- **Competition for 3-year grant funds.** Funds contributed by partners, 3-year awards of approx. \$300-500K to each community.
- **Eligible to compete:** Smaller cities with high poverty rates and low median family incomes
- Funds **cross-sector teams** with ambitious shared goals and
 - **Leadership from public, private, non-profit sectors and community members.**
 - focus on **improving lives of people w/ low- and moderate- incomes.**
 - create **systems change.**
- Can (and should) build on/ **accelerate existing, strong local work.**
- **One proposal per city** → support area of highest local priority, encourage collaboration
- **Planning phase:** 3-6 month funded planning period helps teams with design
- **Merit based:** Winners chosen by **independent, expert Jury** based on public criteria (Fed not on Jury)
- Dedicated **project management** and **technical assistance** delivered by Boston Fed

Defining Sustainability

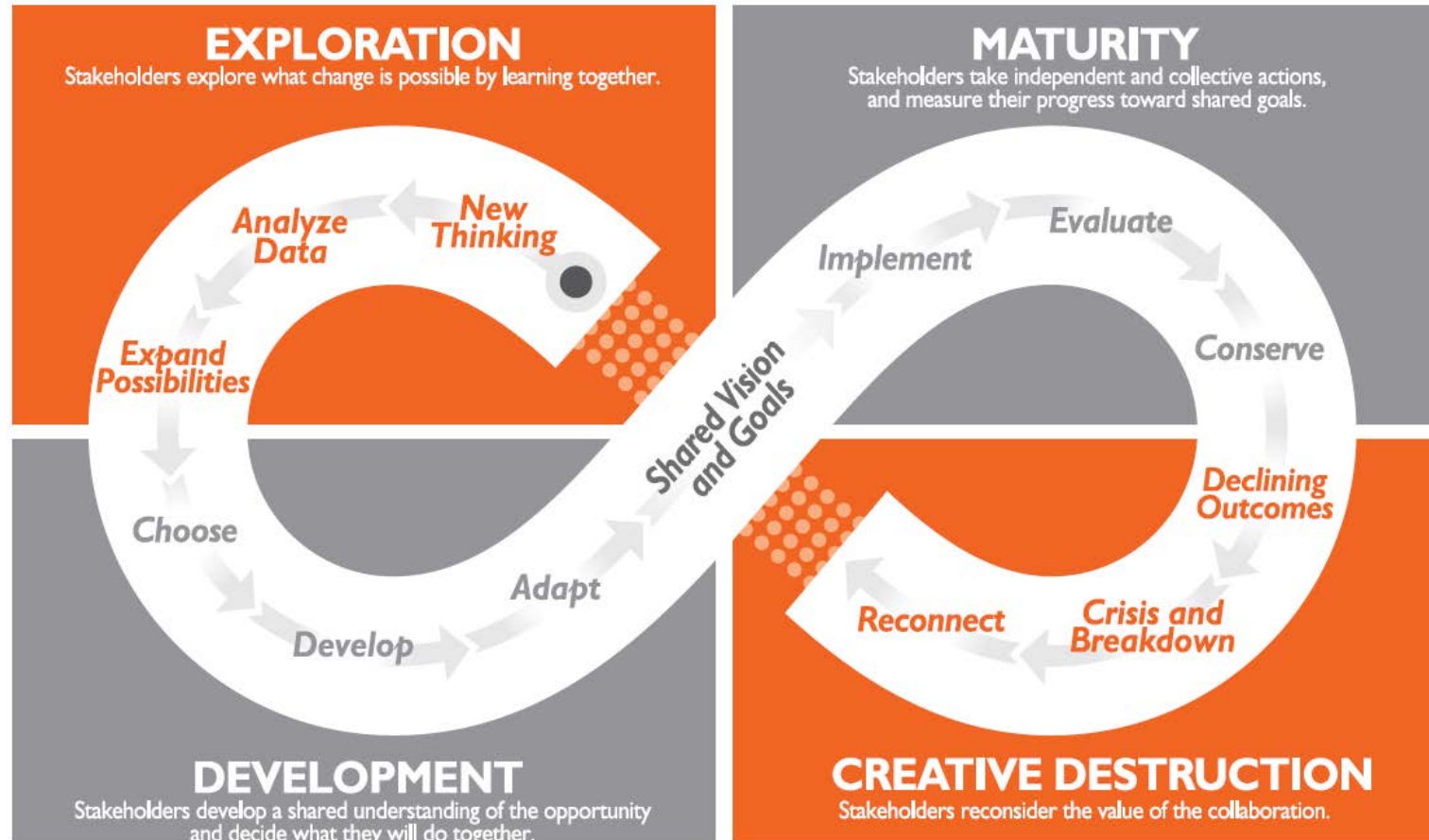
- Program sustainability  viability of a big, systems-focused collaboration
- **Our definition**: Sustainability is the team's capacity to build on the progress of WCC's catalytic phase by continuing to:
 - grow and **deepen its stakeholder engagement**
 - deliver strategic interventions in the service of the ten-year shared result, and
 - **embed the new capacities** informed by WCC's core elements into **how the work is implemented over time**
- It's about sustaining both the **“what”** and the **“how”** of the collective work

Sustainability: Key Lessons from Research

- Empirical research has shown that the following **5 factors are key to sustainability of collective impact initiatives**:
 1. **Strong backbone organization** and dedicated staff support
 2. Active participation from local partners
 3. Authentic community buy-in and involvement
 4. **Action-oriented sustainability plan in place** (quality and range of sustainability activities are key). Planning for sustainability needs to happen early (as early as the beginning of year 2)
 - Sustained coalitions- always thinking about what needed to happen for sustainability, (i.e. obtaining additional types of funding, developing a focus on showing results, getting institutional support for collaborative activities, evolving with the community needs, incorporating new partners, as well as strategizing to handle external factors.)
 5. **Flexible funding from multiple sources** (cash and in-kind)

Sustainability: Research Continued

Collaboration Cycle:



Sustainability: Research Continued

Collaboration cycle:

Four phases of collaborative initiatives (3-5 year cycle): Sustainability-related issues are part of the “Creative Destruction” phase

EXPLORATION: Partners go through a shared learning process that builds a shared understanding of the root causes of challenges and what change might be possible.

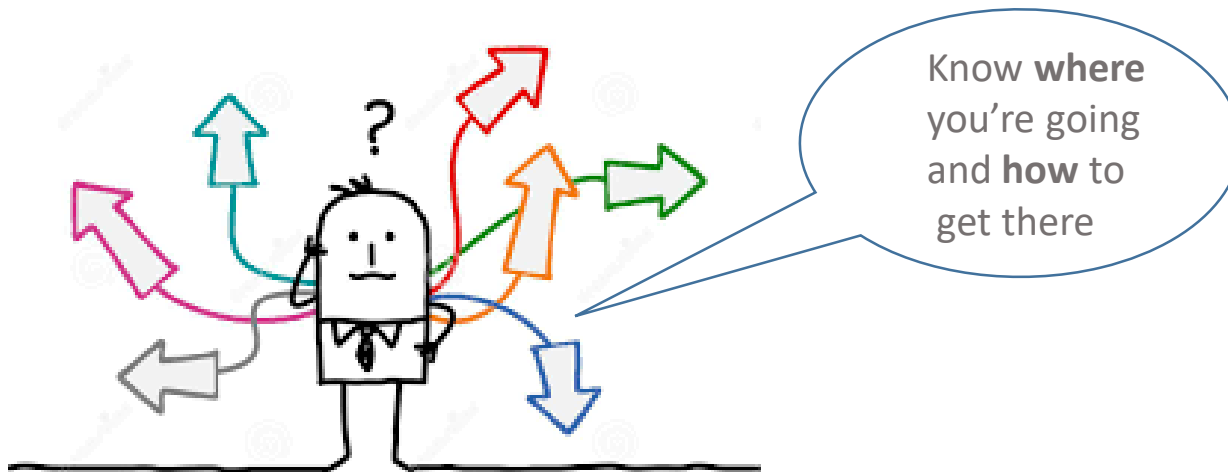
DEVELOPMENT: Partners identify the areas within the complex system where they want to first catalyze change, develop a shared vision and goals, and agree to a framework for how they will work together in the future.

MATURITY: Partners take actions together and separately to achieve shared goals, progress is measured, and adjustments are made.

CREATIVE DESTRUCTION: Partners in the collaboration re-evaluate whether the outcomes merit the resources invested and the cycle resumes with an exploration of what’s working, what’s possible, and whether the collaboration can be sustained.

Getting Ready for Transition

- Partners need to make strategic operational decisions about the next phase of collaboration while simultaneously continuing to implement existing work seeded by original grant in the community.
- Partnerships need to have a plan that provides a path forward (or a realistic direction) for advancing their work toward their long-term goal, while deepening their use and spread of its core principles.



Key Sustainability Outcomes

Sustaining the “What” and the “How”

- Concrete plans for the initiative’s future are in place
- Early systems changes (internal and external) achieved during grant period are advanced
- Continued benefits or improved outcomes for target population(s)

- Broadened, deepened, or maintained level of cross-sector collaboration
- Partner organizations deepen the use of core elements
- Diffusion of additional collaborative practices to existing partner institutions or spread of core elements to relevant networks in the community

Common Sustainability Challenges

- Backbones should not be the only partners worrying about sustainability-responsibility to be shared by all the partners
- Managing initiative director transitions; onboarding new directors into complex role
- Planning and executing substantial changes to governance structures; merging with other tables of stakeholders in city
- Raising/managing follow-on investment; braiding funds
- Identifying holes in existing strategies and creating more effecting paths to impact; rightsizing shared agendas
- Difficult conversations about the give-and-get arrangement between institutions and collaborative effort; re-affirming/sun-setting commitment and distributing responsibility

Discussion Questions

- Of the 5 factors that are key to sustainability, which are strongest and weakest for your partnership? What do you think it would take to strengthen your capacity in those areas?
- What is/are your biggest concern(s) about your collective work over the next 3-5 years? i.e. What keeps you up at night?
- What supports/resources do you and your partners need to plan for the next, more advanced phase of your shared work?
- What tough, sustainability-related questions do you still need to address as part of the planning process for the future?