

**NONPROFIT NETWORK**

# The Nonprofit Ecosystem

Systems-level approaches to sustainable change

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## THE PERFORMANCE IMPERATIVE

A FRAMEWORK FOR SOCIAL-SECTOR EXCELLENCE

performanceimperative.org

### WELL-DESIGNED & WELL-IMPLEMENTED PROGRAMS & STRATEGIES

**LEADERS AND MANAGERS**

- Design programs with careful attention to the larger ecosystem in which they operate, including racial, cultural, geographical, historical, and political dynamics.

### Today's Agenda

- ▶ Provide an Overview of the Ecosystem Approach
- ▶ Activity: Your Client & the Ecosystem
- ▶ Activity: A Different Way of Thinking
- ▶ Our Work Today: Social Good/Social Change Spectrum

## Today's Objectives

- ▶ By the end of this session, Nonprofit Network participants will:
  - ▶ List three benefits of using the ecosystem approach
  - ▶ Identify at least 5 players and at least 5 environmental conditions in their ecosystem
  - ▶ Leave with the intent to design programs with **careful attention to the larger ecosystem in which they operate**, including racial, cultural, geographic, historical, and political dynamics. (Performance Imperative - Pillar 3)

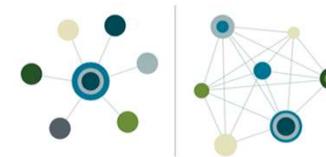
## Toward the Ecosystem Approach

### From

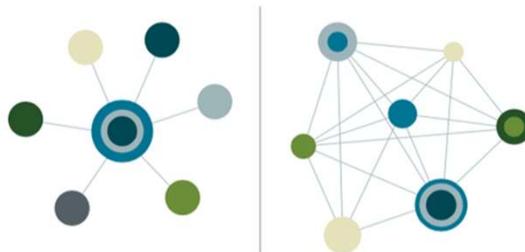
- ▶ Identifying gaps and needs in the external environment and independently aiming to fill them.
- ▶ Alleviating symptoms

### To

- ▶ Identifying WHERE WE FIT, what our unique role is, and how we can work with others to fill the gaps and needs.
- ▶ Solving underlying causes of symptoms



## Toward the Ecosystem Approach From Me to We



## Ecosystem mapping creates a visual of your community

- ▶ ...which aims to identify gaps in essential services and functions
- ▶ ...and enables you to strategize beyond symptoms of a problem and address the larger systemic issues and problems

## Your Client in the Ecosystem

- ▶ Your client...
  - ▶ What are the factors that led to that person needing the service you provide?
  - ▶ What's the ideal end result for that person?  
(for example - if they are hungry, is the result to feed them? Hopefully, the ideal solution is that the client is no longer hungry.)
  - ▶ What partners could you work with to address the factors that led to that need?

## Steps to Ecosystem Mapping

### 1. Identify the players in your ecosystem

- ▶ **Resource providers:** all the people contributing time, money, knowledge, information
- ▶ **Key allies & complementary movements:** primary partners, allied organizations, complimentary movements
- ▶ **Key stakeholders:** clients, beneficiaries, customers (those who stand to gain the most from solving the problem)
- ▶ **Opponents and problem makers:** those actively working against you and/or creating the problem or making it worse
- ▶ **Influential bystanders:** Those with power and influence who aren't currently activated to your cause but who might be and/or those who might be affected by your issue tangentially.

<https://nonprofitnotes.com/ecosystem>

## Steps to Ecosystem Mapping

### 2. Identify the environmental conditions

- ▶ **Policies and administrative processes and structures:** laws, regulations, rules, processes, policies, procedures, corruption
- ▶ **Economics:** economic health, distribution of wealth, growth of markets, trends in fundraising
- ▶ **Geography and infrastructure:** physical location, transportation, communication, urban/rural/suburban issues
- ▶ **Societal norms and culture:** norms, beliefs, cultural memes, social networks, demographic trends
- ▶ **Research:** relevant studies, impact trends, scientific breakthroughs

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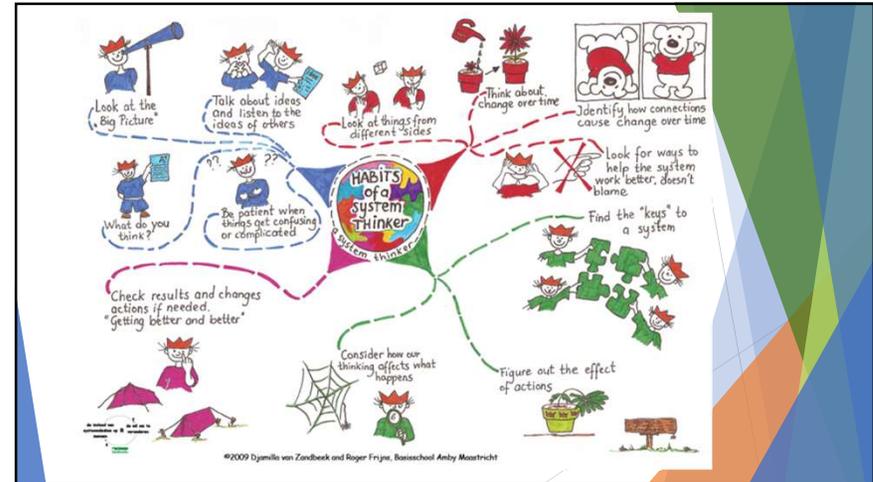
## Toward the Ecosystem Approach From Me to We

- ▶ Your client...
  - ▶ What are the factors that led to that person needing the service you provide?
  - ▶ What's the ideal end result for that person?
  - ▶ Who are the partners that could help address the cause of the need?



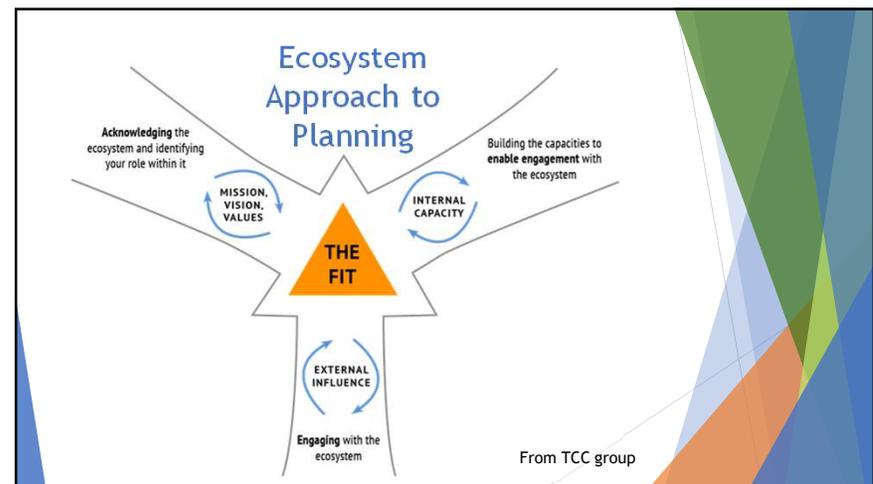
## Using an Ecosystem Approach leads to...

- ▶ Intentional Collaboration
- ▶ Cross-sector partnerships
- ▶ Building and developing a better understanding of our relationships to each other
- ▶ Thinking about how we can build our capacity to better support integration in the system
- ▶ Considering complicated relationships between organizations and the larger environment/system



## Thinking About the Ecosystem: A Different Way of Thinking

- ▶ How can we work with others to achieve results?
  - ▶ Who shares our vision?
  - ▶ What is our unique role in the ecosystem?
  - ▶ What is our role in building shared values?
- ▶ How can we recalibrate our work?
  - ▶ Are there others to whom we might pass the baton?
  - ▶ At which decision-making tables should we make sure we are sitting?
  - ▶ In what areas do we lead versus areas to support? And what are the implications of that positioning?





**Our Work:**  
Social Good/Social Service,  
Social Change,  
or Something In Between

**Our Work: Social Good/Social Service, Social Change, or Something In Between**

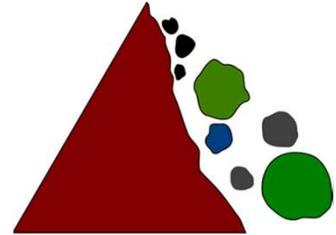
- ▶ **Social good/social service work** addresses the needs of individuals reeling from the personal and devastating impact of institutional systems.
- ▶ **Social change work** challenges the root causes of the negative impact which has been perpetrated through these systems.

<https://www.southwestern.edu/live/files/1151>

Social GOOD	Social CHANGE	
		
food pantry	Case management	Working with local employers to advocate for a living wage
Emergency shelter	Case management	Advocating for a living wage
parent involvement - attending a choir concert	parent engagement - chairing the fall festival	parent engagement - running for school board

Using the post-its at your table, write down three activities or programs your organization does/provides  
(1 program or activity per post-it note)

**Raining Rocks**



## Getting to the Root

A “root cause” is the underlying factor or condition that makes a problem happen.

A “root cause analysis” is a procedure for discovering and analyzing the causes of problems in an effort to determine what can be done to solve or prevent them.

## Getting to the Root using the 5 whys?

- » What community problems does our agency’s mission seek to address?
  - » What would our society look like if the problems we work on were fully addressed?
  - » What are some of the root causes of these problems?
1. Write down the specific problem. Writing the issue helps you formalize the problem and describe it completely. It also helps the organization to focus on the same problem.
  2. Ask why the problem happens and write the answer down below the problem.
  3. If the answer you just provided doesn't identify the root cause of the problem that you wrote down in Step 1, ask why again and write that answer down.
  4. Loop back to step 3 until the group is in agreement that the problem's root cause is identified. Again, this may take fewer or more times than five Whys.

## Symptoms Versus Root Causes

- ▶ Root Cause: Not a living wage

### Living Wage Calculation for McLennan County, Texas

The living wage shown is the hourly rate that an individual must earn to support their family, if they are the sole provider and are working full-time (2080 hours per year). All values are per adult in a family unless otherwise noted. The state minimum wage is the same for all individuals, regardless of how many dependents they may have. The poverty rate is typically quoted as gross annual income. We have converted it to an hourly wage for the sake of comparison.

For further detail, please reference the technical documentation here.

Hourly Wages	1 Adult	1 Adult 1 Child	1 Adult 2 Children	1 Adult 3 Children	2 Adults (1 Working)	2 Adults (1 Working) 1 Child	2 Adults (1 Working) 2 Children	2 Adults (1 Working) 3 Children	2 Adults (1 Working) Part Time 1 Child*	2 Adults 1 Child	2 Adults 2 Children	2 Adults 3 Children	
Living Wage	\$10.02	\$22.10	\$25.16	\$31.60	\$17.37	\$20.74	\$23.59	\$26.15	\$15.48	\$8.68	\$11.87	\$14.06	\$16.10
Poverty Wage	\$5.80	\$7.81	\$9.82	\$11.83	\$7.81	\$9.82	\$11.83	\$13.84		\$3.90	\$4.91	\$5.91	\$6.92
Minimum Wage	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25		\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25	\$7.25

MIT's Living Wage calculator: <http://livingwage.mit.edu>

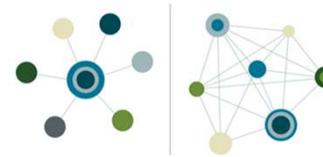
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## Closing Take-aways

- ▶ What is your organization's role in influencing the external environment?
- ▶ What keeps you from looking outside of your organization for solutions to our community's challenges?
- ▶ How can we support each other?
- ▶ How can funders support nonprofits in this?

## Resources

- ▶ <http://creightoncollaborative.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/the-habits-of-systems-thinker.png>
- ▶ <http://livingwage.mit.edu/counties/48309>
- ▶ [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/cultivate\\_your\\_ecosystem](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/cultivate_your_ecosystem)
- ▶ <http://nonprofitnotes.com/ecosystem>
- ▶ <https://www.tccgrp.com/blog/using-an-ecosystem-approach-to-define-nonprofit-strategy/>
- ▶ <https://socialimpactarchitects.com/ecosystem/>