



At your tables, discuss:

*What unexpected skill do you  
use at work?*

# Narrative Change for a Skills-Based Future

Purpose



## The Challenge

**How can we leverage skills to build a future rooted in mobility that is good for business and good for workers?**



The Superpower

# Narrative Change





# Breaking down the next hour

**01** Demystifying narrative change (group discussion)

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**02** The skills narrative landscape

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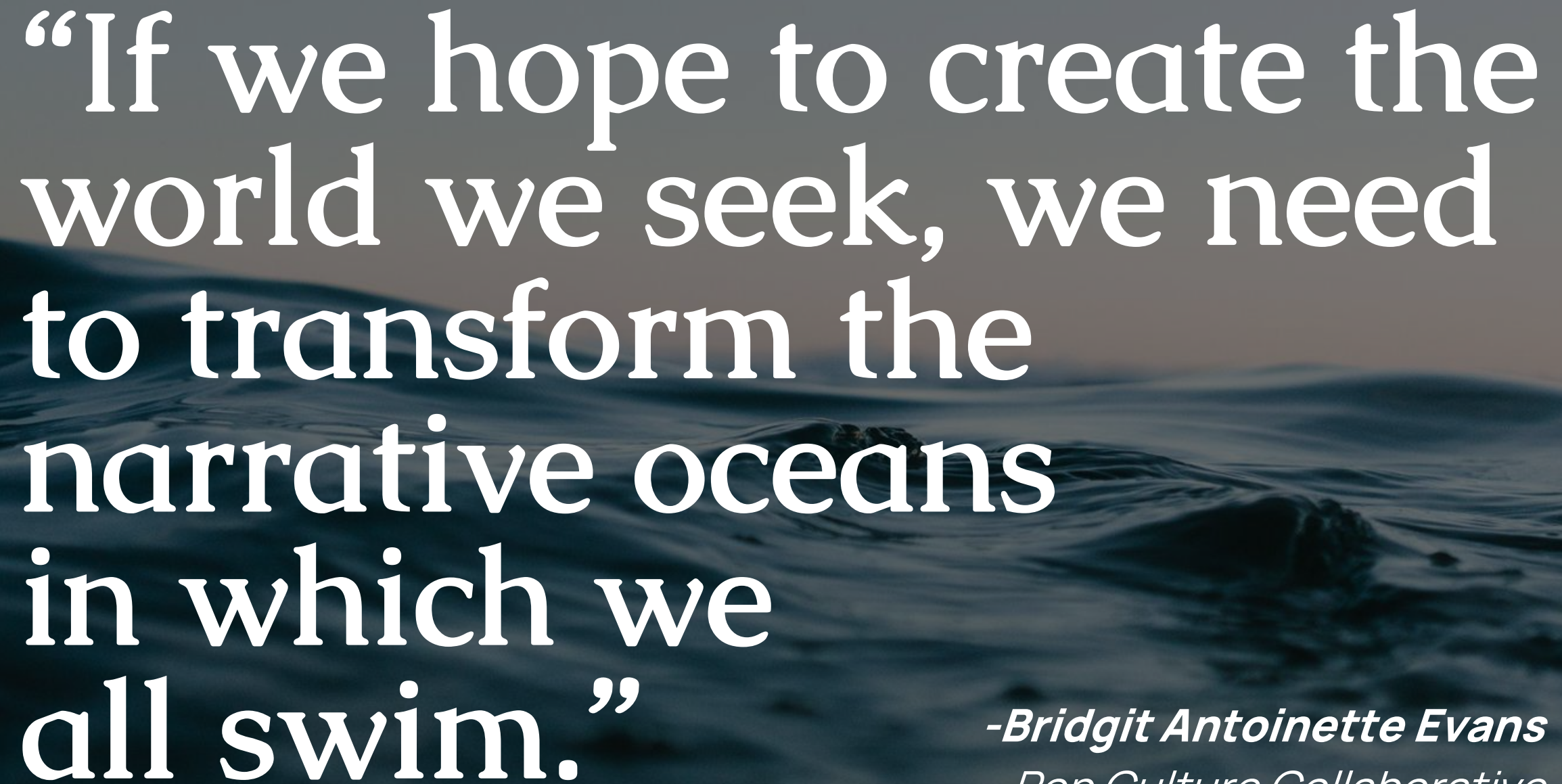
**03** Building a narrative collaborative (table discussion)

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**04** How can you get involved?


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# Demystifying Narrative Change



“If we hope to create the world we seek, we need to transform the narrative oceans in which we all swim.”

*-Bridgit Antoinette Evans  
Pop Culture Collaborative*

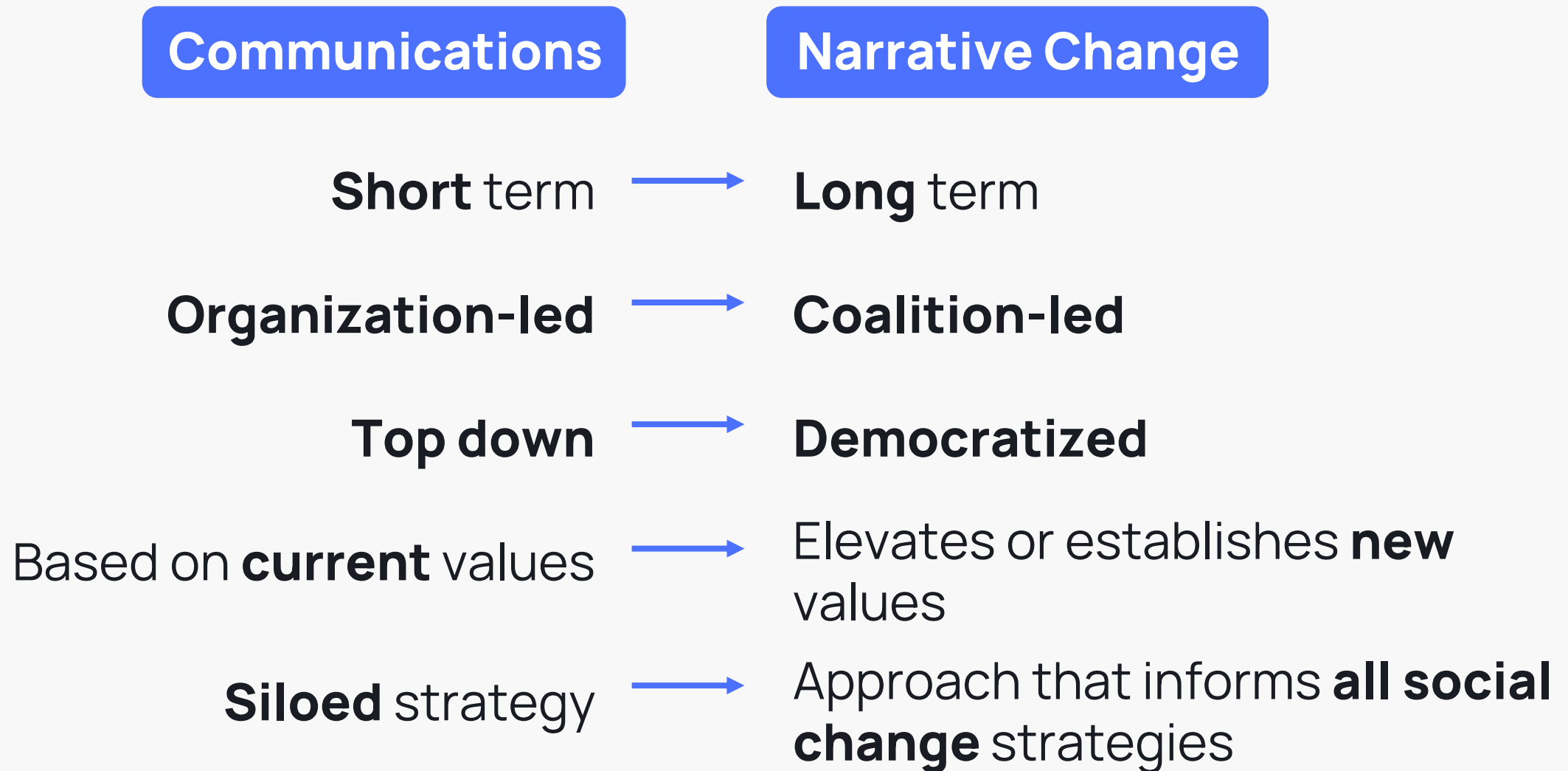
A large crowd of people is gathered outdoors, likely at a protest or demonstration. Many individuals are holding up signs, some of which clearly display the words "BLACK LIVES MATTER". The scene is filled with people of various ages and ethnicities, some wearing hats and backpacks. The background shows trees and a utility pole under a clear sky. The overall atmosphere is one of a significant public gathering.

Narrative change is a movement - a movement toward a new way to understand the world.



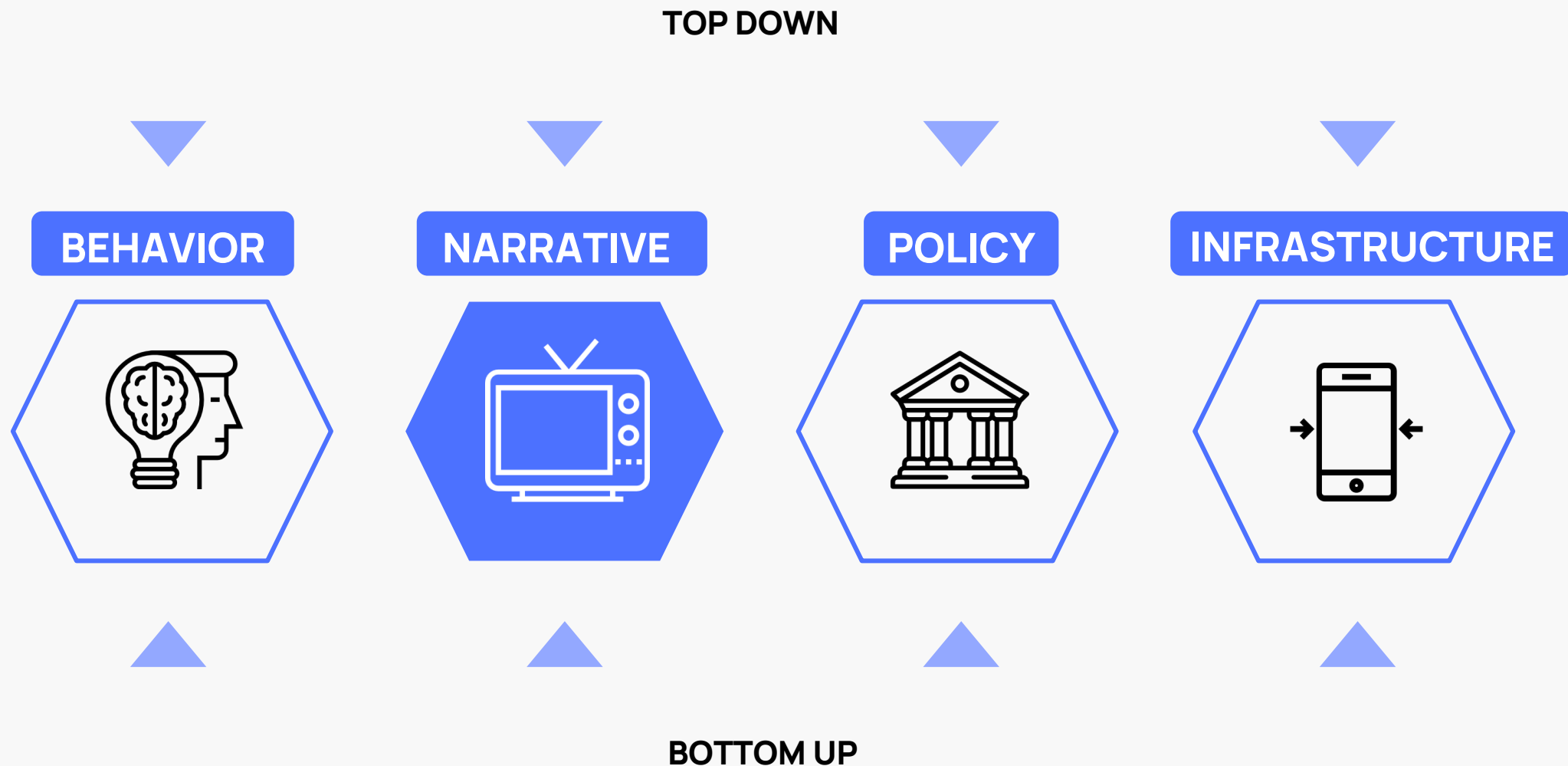


# Communications vs. Narrative Change





Narrative change is one of several core pillars of creating systemic change.





Let's look at an example of  
powerful narrative change work.



In 1995, 80% of Americans supported the death penalty.  
Today, nearly half of Americans oppose the death penalty.





# How did advocates shift the narrative on the death penalty?

**A shared vision:  
Abolish the  
death penalty**

**They knew their  
audience(s)**

**They chose  
strategic and  
diverse key  
messengers**

**They focused on  
compelling  
stories and data.**

**They played the long game.**



The Lesson Here is...

Narrative change requires a **sustained,** **consistent,** and **collective** effort in order to change dominant, socially ingrained stories, values, and messages.

If we can change the story, we can create the context for our work to win.

Can you think of another  
example of narrative change?

What do you think made  
it effective?

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Discussion

# The Skills Narrative Landscape



## The context:

Over the past year, we've been working to identify a potential skills-based narrative that can unite the field.

### To do this we:

- Mapped the current landscape
- Talked to experts
- Tested some narratives

Let's look at what we learned.

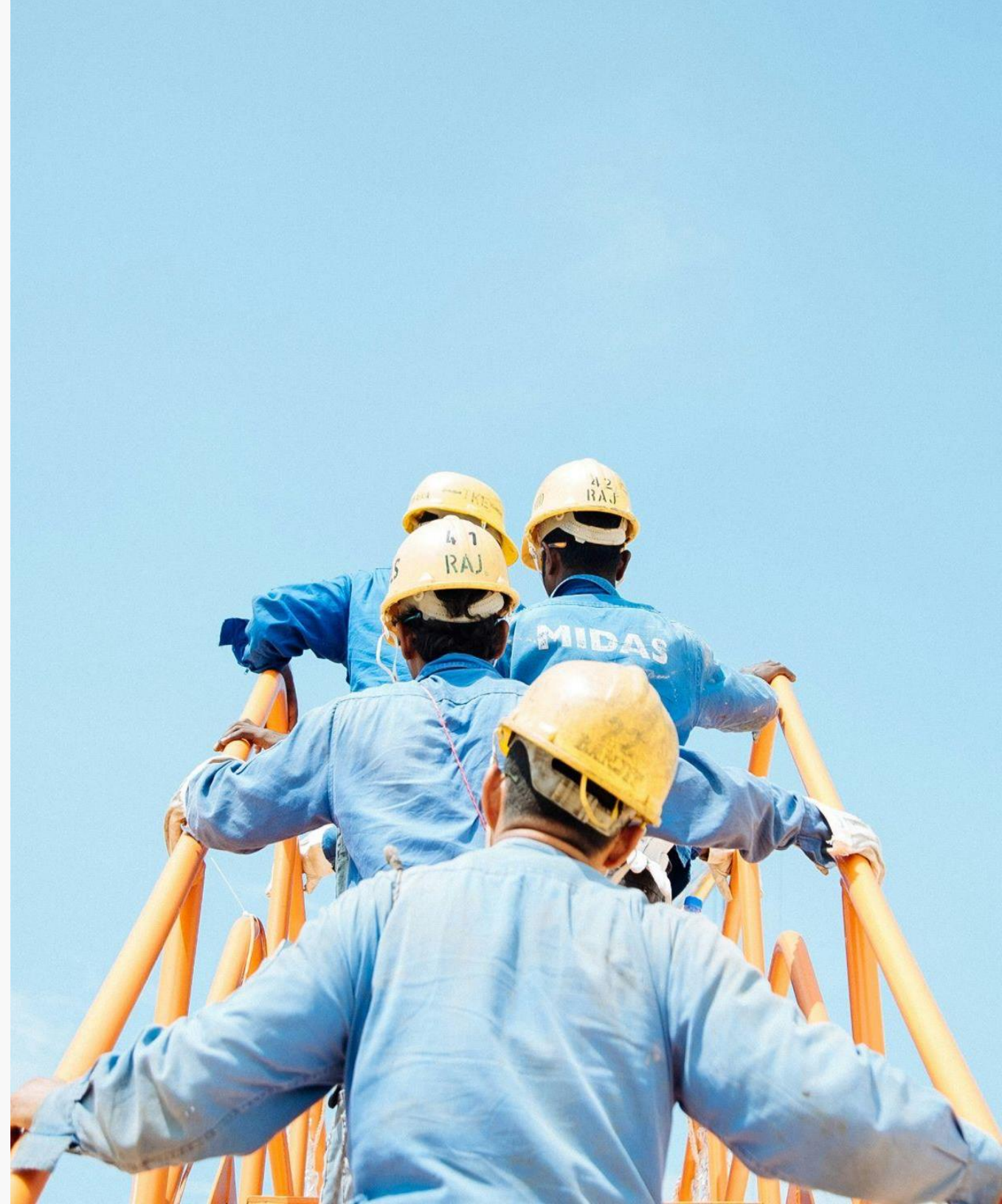
A soccer ball with a pink and blue pattern is on a green grass field. In the background, a white goalpost and net are visible. The scene is dimly lit, suggesting dusk or dawn.

There is a lot going on in the  
'skills' space.

Without a shared narrative  
rooted in a common goal, we will  
not be able to achieve scaled change.

## Our entry point:

Leveraging skills to build a future with mobility - one that is good for business & good for workers.





# A first step is aligning on conflicting terminology...

Workforce  
Development

Skills-based

Competency  
based hiring

Non-degree  
holding

STARs

Skills +

Skills-first



...And understanding of the competing narratives in which the skills-based conversation is happening.

### Individual Drive

**Hustle Culture**  
**Rags to Riches**  
**American Dream**

### Future of Work

**Technology is the Future**  
**New Skills Needed**

### Dropout Heroes

**The Influencer**  
**Millionaire**  
**The Genius Wunderkind**

### Unfair System

**The Game is Rigged**  
**Robin Hood Narrative**

### Education is the Way Out

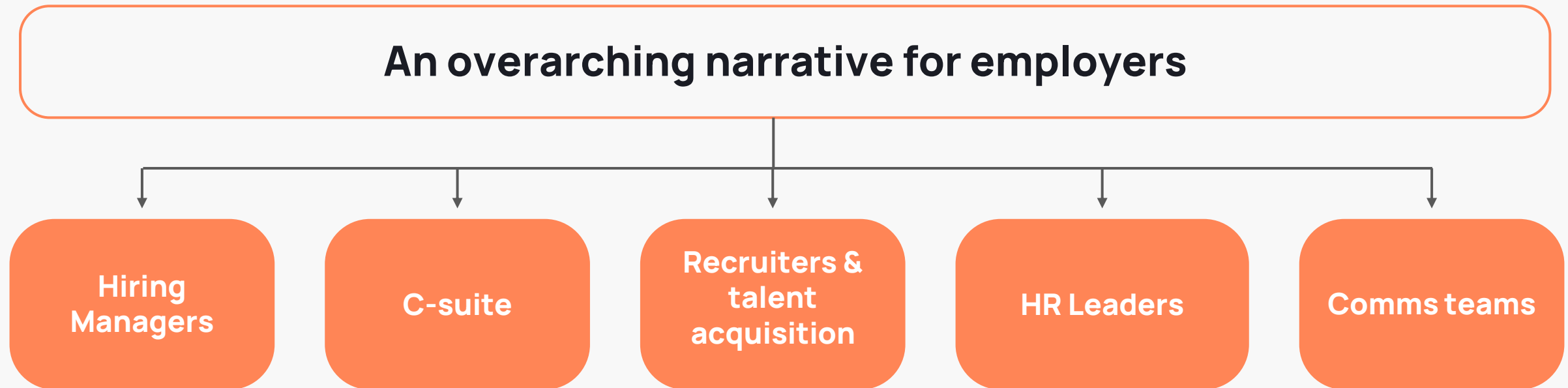
**Rags to Riches**  
**American Dream**  
**Meritocracy Myths**

### The Stable Job

**Intern to CEO**  
**Loyalty is Rewarded**



While we believe we need to start by targeting employers, this audience is fragmented and each group has specific communication needs.





# We identified five narrative challenges that could be repositioned to more accurately describe the benefits of skills-based talent practices

**From**

**To**

Skills vs. Degrees



Skills Plus

DEI Initiative



Business & People Imperative

Silver Bullet



A Tool in the Toolbox

Expecting Change Overnight



Transformation Takes Time

Unproven Outcomes



Evidence of Early Success





# We tested multiple narratives, aligning on: A Win-win Workforce

## Resilient Futures

Preserving the workforce of tomorrow in a changing world

## Hidden Talent

Focusing on unlocking new talent in the pipeline

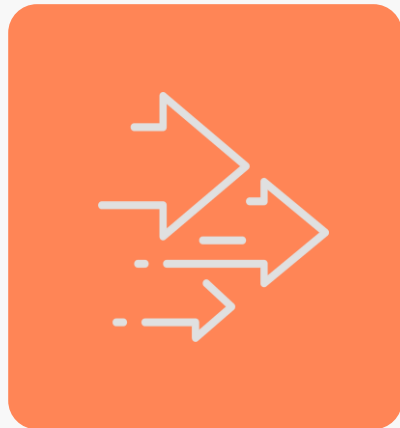
## Many Ladders

Emphasizing the different paths that workers can take to a job

## Win-Win Workforce

Good for business  
and good  
for workers

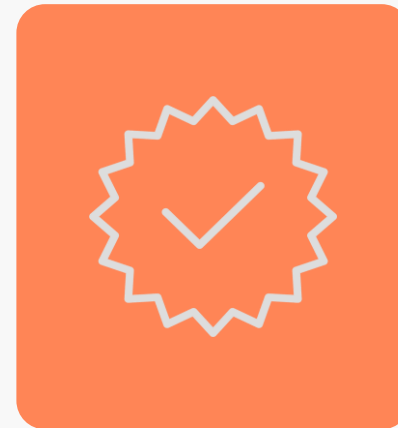
# The 4 R's of a Win-Win Workforce



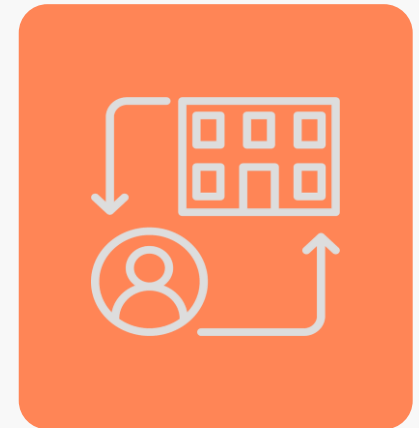
**Reach**



**Resilience**



**Retention**



**Reform**



## The Opportunity

**A narrative collaborative**, focused on shifting the narrative on a skills-based future through targeted content and messaging co-created & distributed through partners.

Building a  
narrative  
collaborative

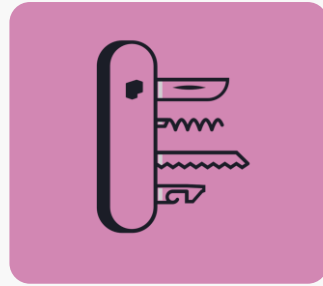
A group of diverse people, including men and women of various ethnicities, are standing in a line with their backs to the camera. They have their arms around each other's shoulders, suggesting a sense of unity and collaboration. The background is a dark, textured wall.

## What is a Narrative Collaborative?

A Narrative Collaborative serves as a **coordinating body**—an ecosystem—among a group of partners and stakeholders with a **shared goal**. It provides the **infrastructure** for iterative, ongoing **campaigns** and **evolving partnerships**.



# The Benefits of a Collaborative



**Strengthening  
the field**



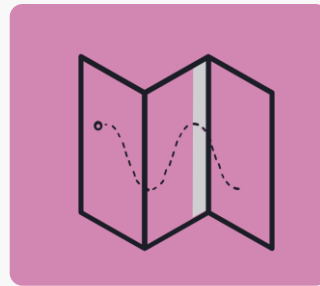
**Identifying new  
strategies**



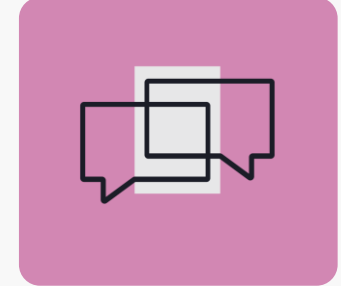
**Experimentation  
and replication**



**Local capacity  
building**



**New campaigns  
and initiatives**

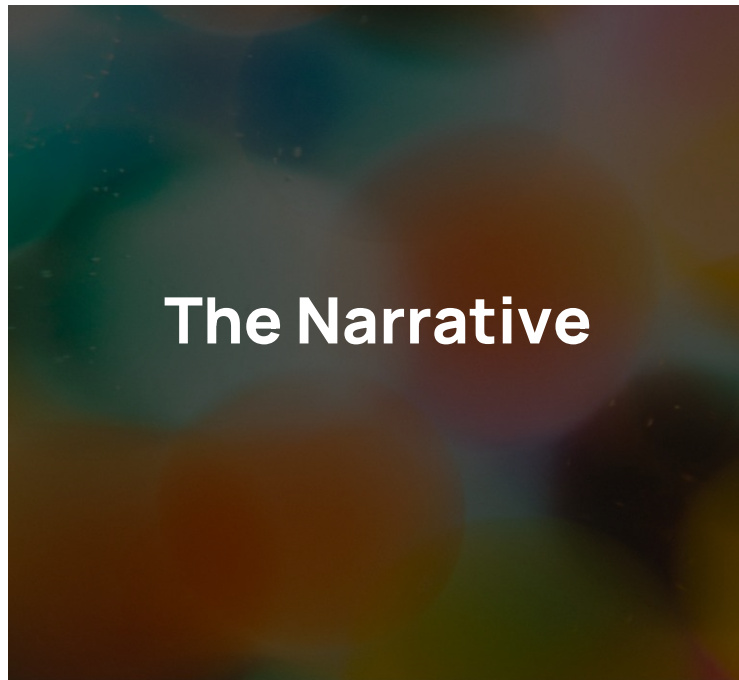


**Coordinating  
collective action**



# A Narrative Collaborative has 5 Key Engagement Elements

**A clear and measurable goal**



**Infrastructure for testing, learning and measuring progress**



# Early thinking on the Partner Ecosystem

## **Wider Skills Ecosystem**

Including policy, behavior change, ecosystem change.

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## **Distribution Partners**

Employer champions, content partners, technical partners, worker advocates, platform partners

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## **Collaborative Leadership**

A coordinating group to lead the strategy, testing and measurement

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## 3 Types of Campaigns

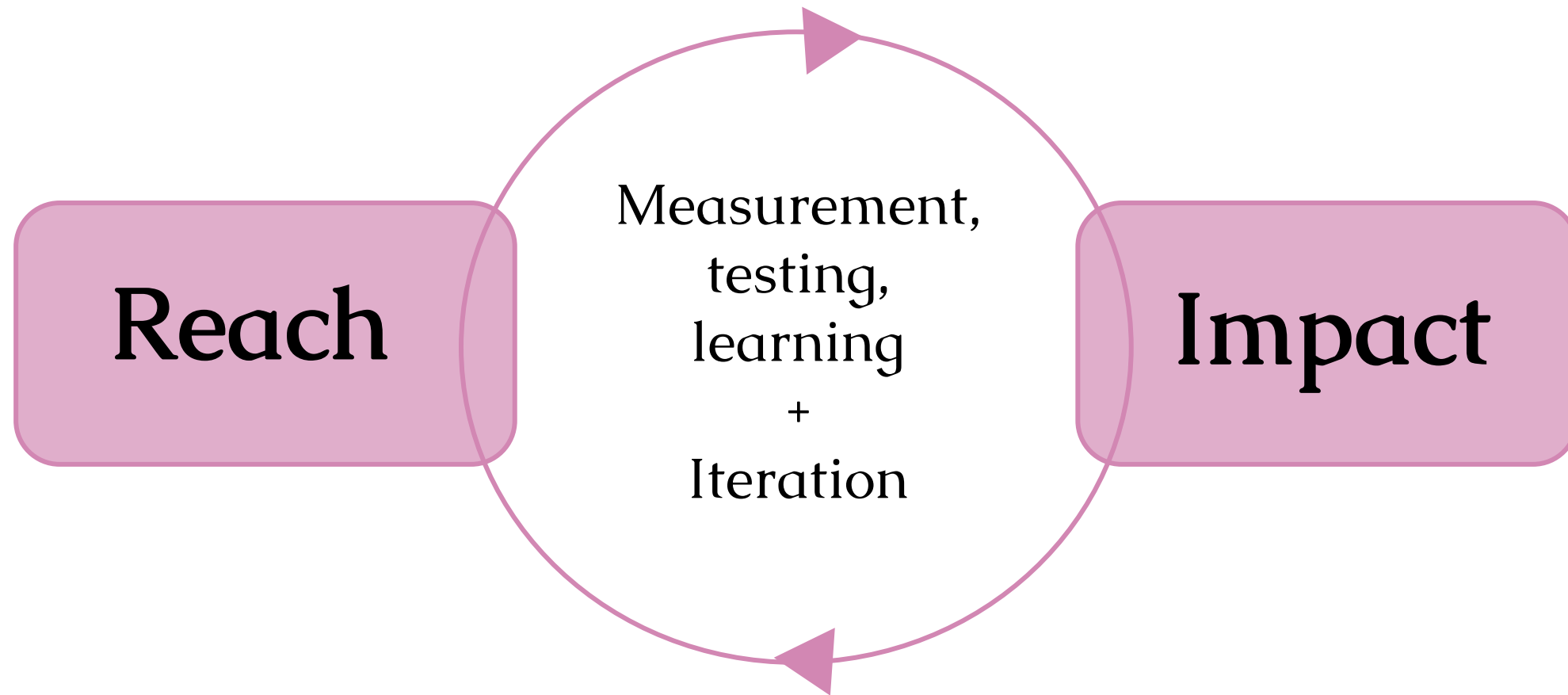
*The Why:*  
**Creating an  
enabling  
environment  
for skills-  
based  
practices**

*The What:*  
**Painting the  
vision of the  
future and  
the pathway  
to get there**

*The How:*  
**Supporting  
the  
implementers  
with success  
stories, tools  
and resources**



# Measurement, Testing and Learning



***Reflect on your and your organization's role  
within the skills movement.***

**What unique capacity or perspective do you  
bring to the work?**

**How does this idea align with your own  
organization's plans and goals?**

How you can get  
involved?



[purpose.com](https://purpose.com)



[weare@purpose.com](mailto:weare@purpose.com)



[@purpose](https://www.instagram.com/purpose)