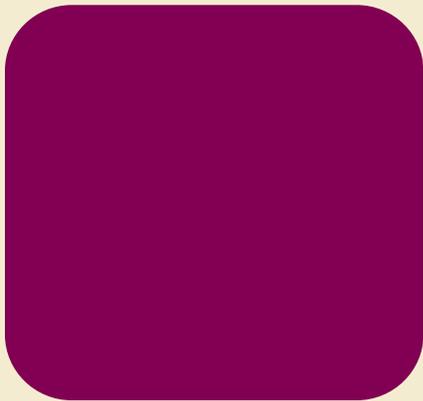
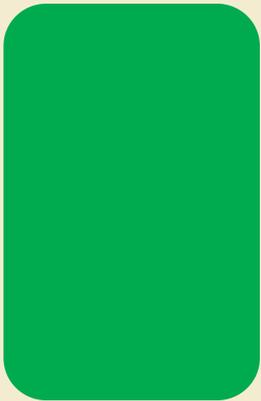




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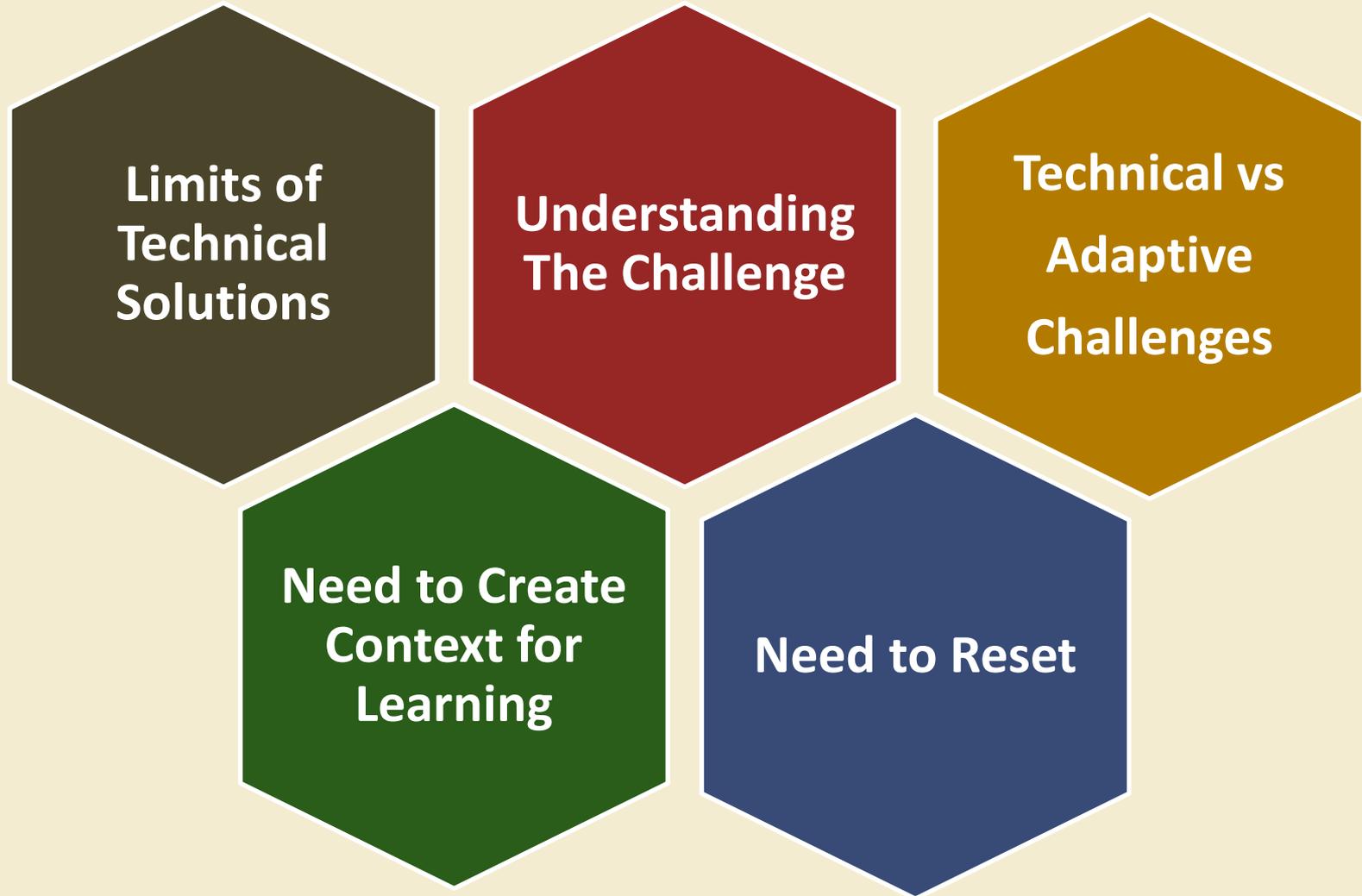
A PMFO Series





Ellen B. Kagen, M.S.W.
Director
Georgetown University Leadership Academy

Understanding the Adaptive Challenge and the Role of Leadership in Times of Change and Innovation



Leadership Today

Deeply held beliefs about leadership are challenged.

Values that made us successful are now less relevant.

Skills that made us successful are now less relevant.

Adapted from R. Heifetz, [Leadership without Easy Answers](#), 1994



You Face Two Different Kinds of Challenges

Technical Challenges

Problem is
clearly defined

Solution and how to
implement it are clear

Everyone's
perspectives are
aligned

Example—Planning
logistics for a multi-
agency meeting

The formal leader has
ability and primary
responsibility

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The formal leader has
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Adaptive Challenges

Problem is not
clearly defined

Solution and how to
implement it are not
clear

People have
competing, yet
legitimate,
perspectives

Example—Getting
multiple agencies to
integrate programs

The formal leader does
not have the ability or
responsibility

Resolving the Challenge is the Responsibility of the Collective Intelligence

It is in the collective intelligence of people at **all levels**, who need to use one another as resources, often across boundaries, and learn their way to new solutions.

Adapted from R. Heifetz and D. Laurie, "The Work of Leadership." *Harvard Business Review*, 1997.



Resolving the Challenge is the Responsibility of the Collective Intelligence

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Does It Require a Change in People's

Values?

Attitudes?

**Habits of
Behavior?**

**Don't try to use a
technical solution...**

Deciding
Telling
Prescribing

**...to Solve an
Adaptive Challenge.**



Challenge: Increasing Cultural and Linguistic Competence

~~Technical Solution: Brochures and materials in native languages~~

Adaptive Solution! Learn the ways of diverse communities and build relationships

Challenge: Desire to use integrated forms across agencies

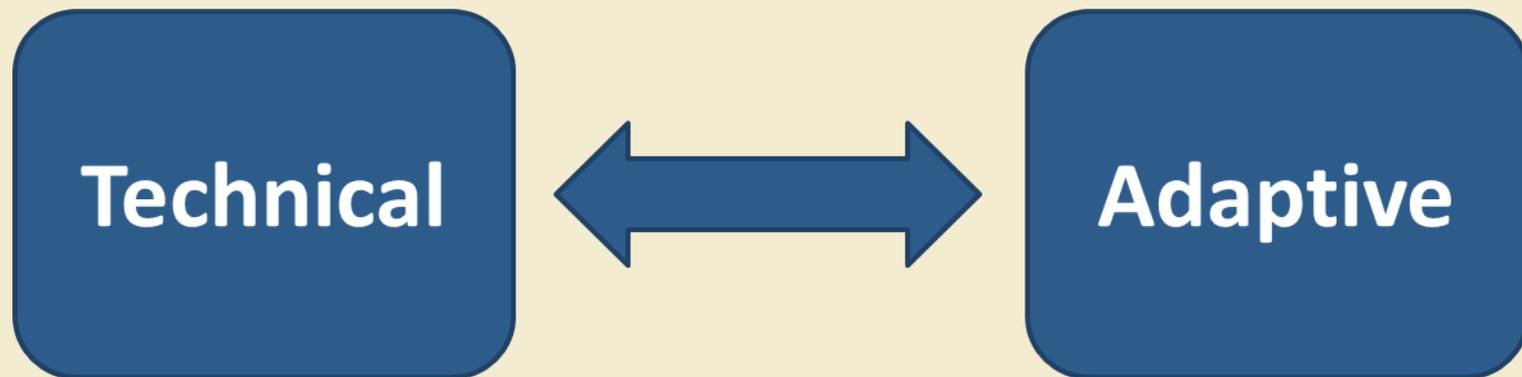
~~Technical Solution: Multiple logos and staple forms together~~

Adaptive Solution! Collaborate to define “unified” and “integrated” and align perspectives



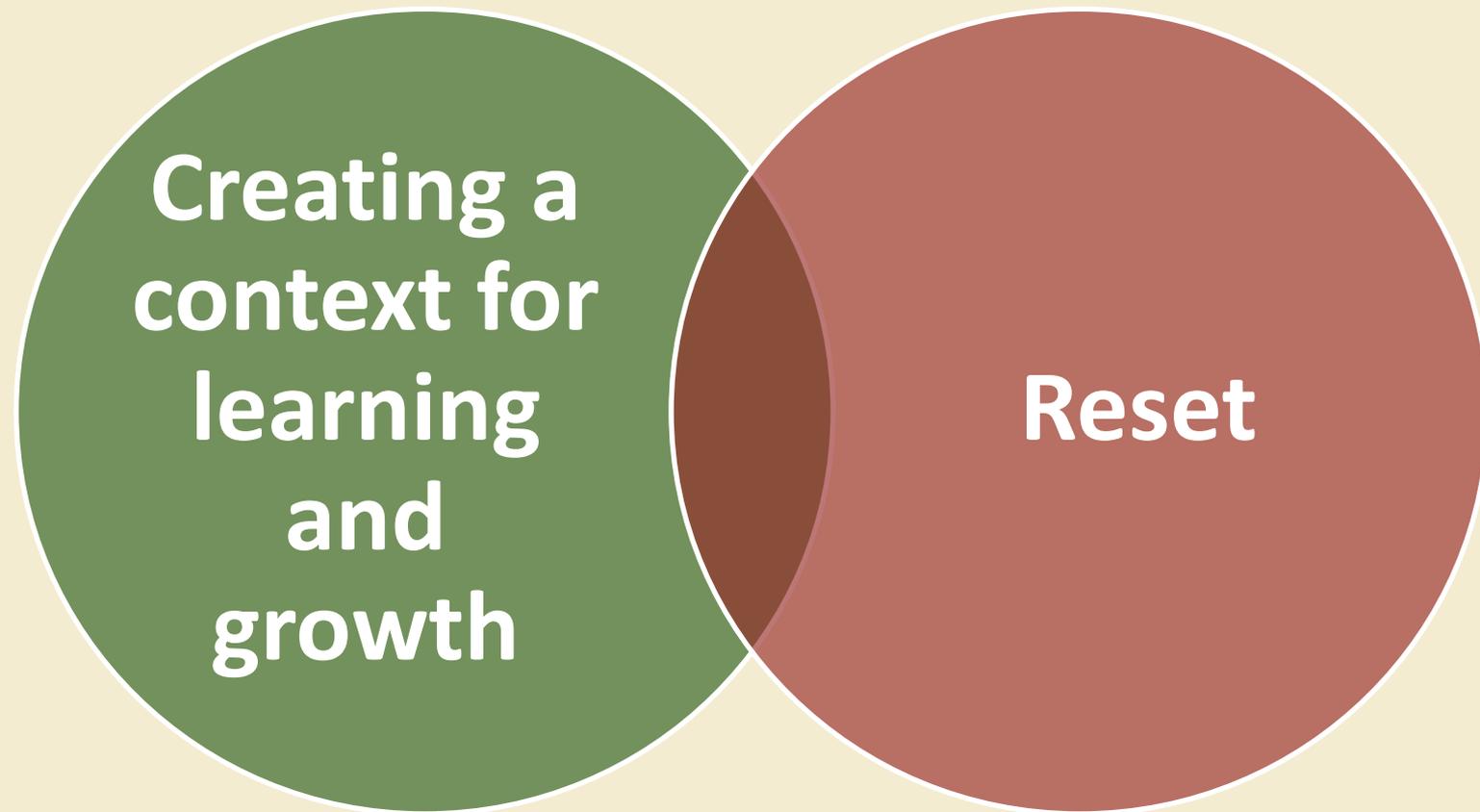


You Will Do Both





Leaders Have Two Primary Roles in Adaptive Work



Your Primary Role as a Leader

Create a context for learning and support so that the innovation or change can be

generated

understood

absorbed

and acted upon by all

Your Primary Role as a Leader

Reset

Revising or adopting new values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors based on an openness to hear new information, perspectives, or truth.



**Me
First!**

**Work to reset
yourself before
asking others
to reset.**

“Reset requires figuring out what, of all that you say you value, is really important and must be preserved ... and what, of all that you value, you must leave behind in order to adapt to a fundamental new reality.”

R. Heifetz, A. Grashow, M. Linsky, “Leadership in a (Permanent) Crisis.” *Harvard Business Review*, 2009.





Summary

Let go of the pressure you feel to apply technical solutions to adaptive challenges

Step back to see the adaptive work

You may have to reset

Shifting to adaptive work is a process



P. Nelson, *There's a Hole in my Sidewalk*. 2012.

**Developed by Ellen B. Kagen, M.S.W.
Georgetown University**

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