

Beyond the Data

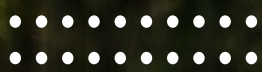
Crystal A. Powers
University of Nebraska



**Nebraska
Water Center**
Daugherty WaterforFood Global Institute



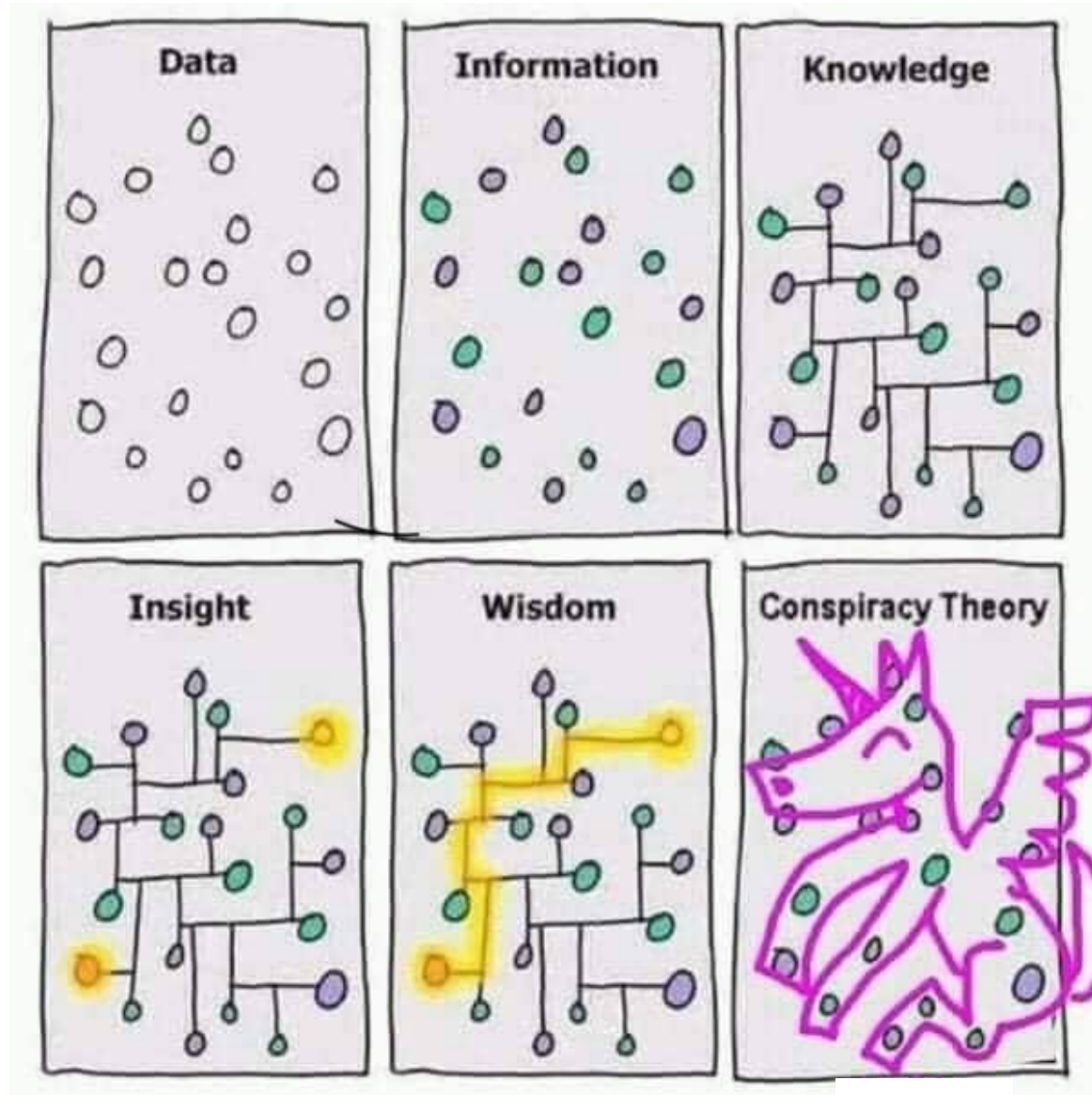
THE DAUGHERTY
WATER *for* **FOOD**
GLOBAL INSTITUTE
at the University of Nebraska



Sustainable Agriculture
Research & Education

This material is based upon work that is supported by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, under award number 2023-38640-39573 through the North Central Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education program under project number ENC23-228. USDA is an equal opportunity employer and service provider. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the U.S. Department of Agriculture."

OUR TASK:
Bringing
clarity to
complexity





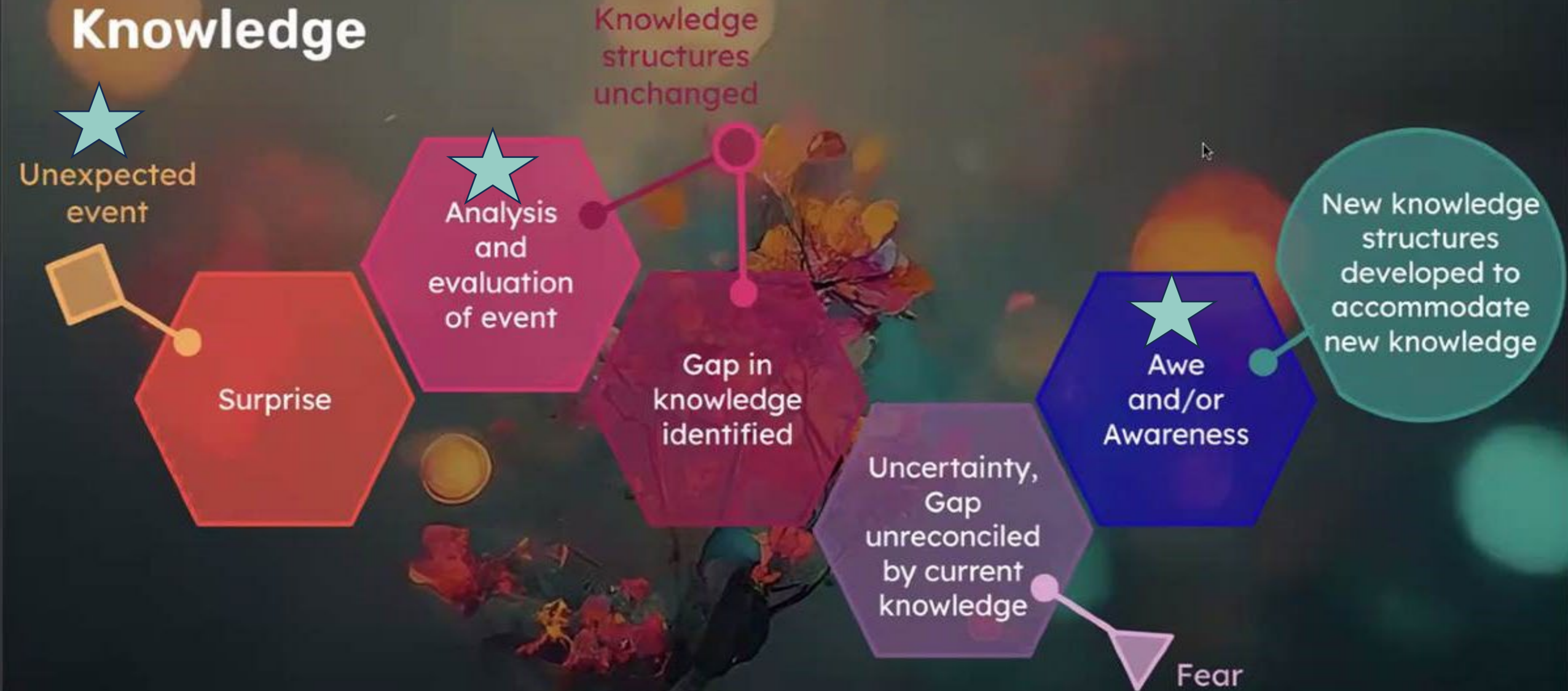
Fast vs slow brain processing

95% unconscious

5% conscious

Image by ElisaRiva from Pixabay

Wonder & Awe: Fundamentally Restructuring Knowledge





Emotion

Fear

Vulnerability

Indecision

Guilt

How can our conversations go awry?

- Contaminants in water: **disgust**
- Being corrected: **embarrassment**
- What I was told by trusted people was wrong: **betrayal**
- I unintentionally caused a problem: **guilt**
- **Fear** of trauma: fires, floods, drought, farm crisis, pandemic...

Why do we get stuck when confronted with new ideas?

Cognitive biases

- Patterns of deviation from rational judgement
- 180+

Backfire effect

- strengthens original beliefs
- Feels threatening particularly if it is tied to personal identity

Brain biology

- Dopamine & adrenaline: winning an argument, eating
- Cortisol: stress -> fight or flight

Emotion >>

Hope

Confidence

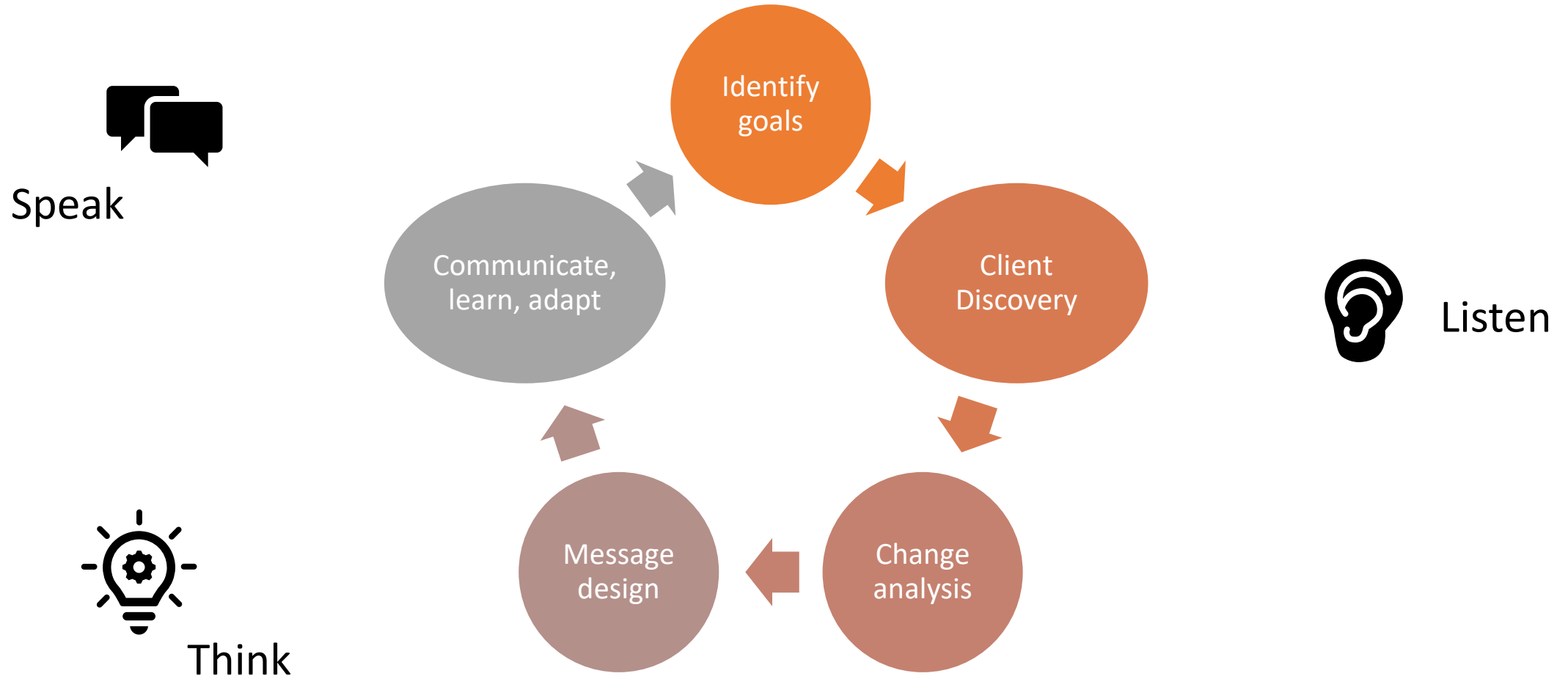
Motivation

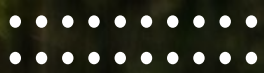


Decisions engage our whole being



Message Design Process

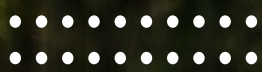




Module 1: Discovering the story

*“Change happens at
the speed of trust”*
~S. Covey





Building Your Conservation Story: Understanding Yourself

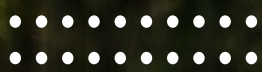


Nobody cares how much you know,
until they know how much you care.

— Theodore Roosevelt —

AZ QUOTES

What is your story? Your motivations?



Building Our Conservation Story: Understanding Farmers

Discover agri-CULTURE



Farm media



Agricultural events



Research



Conversation



Farmer profiles

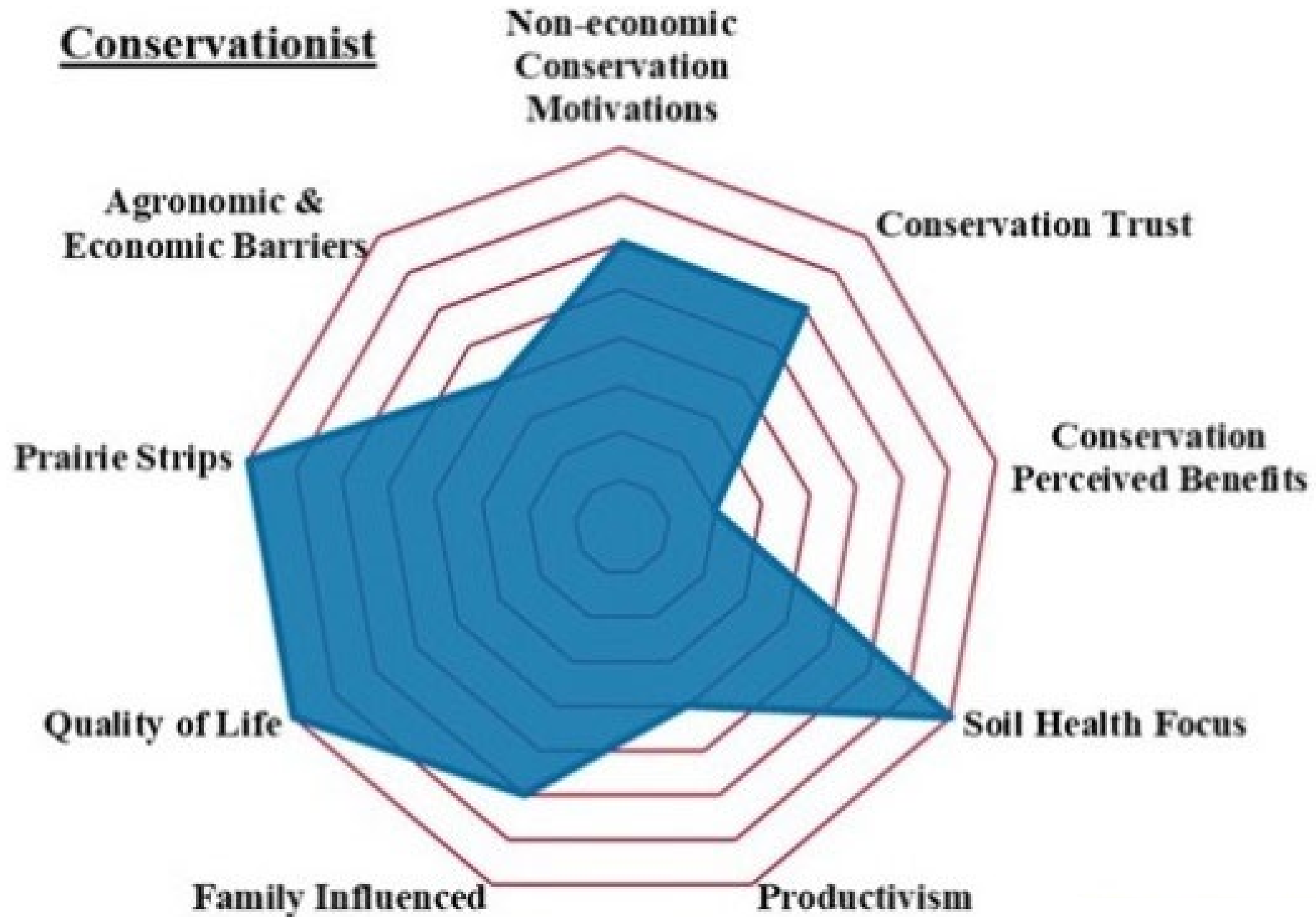
Conservationist

Deliberative

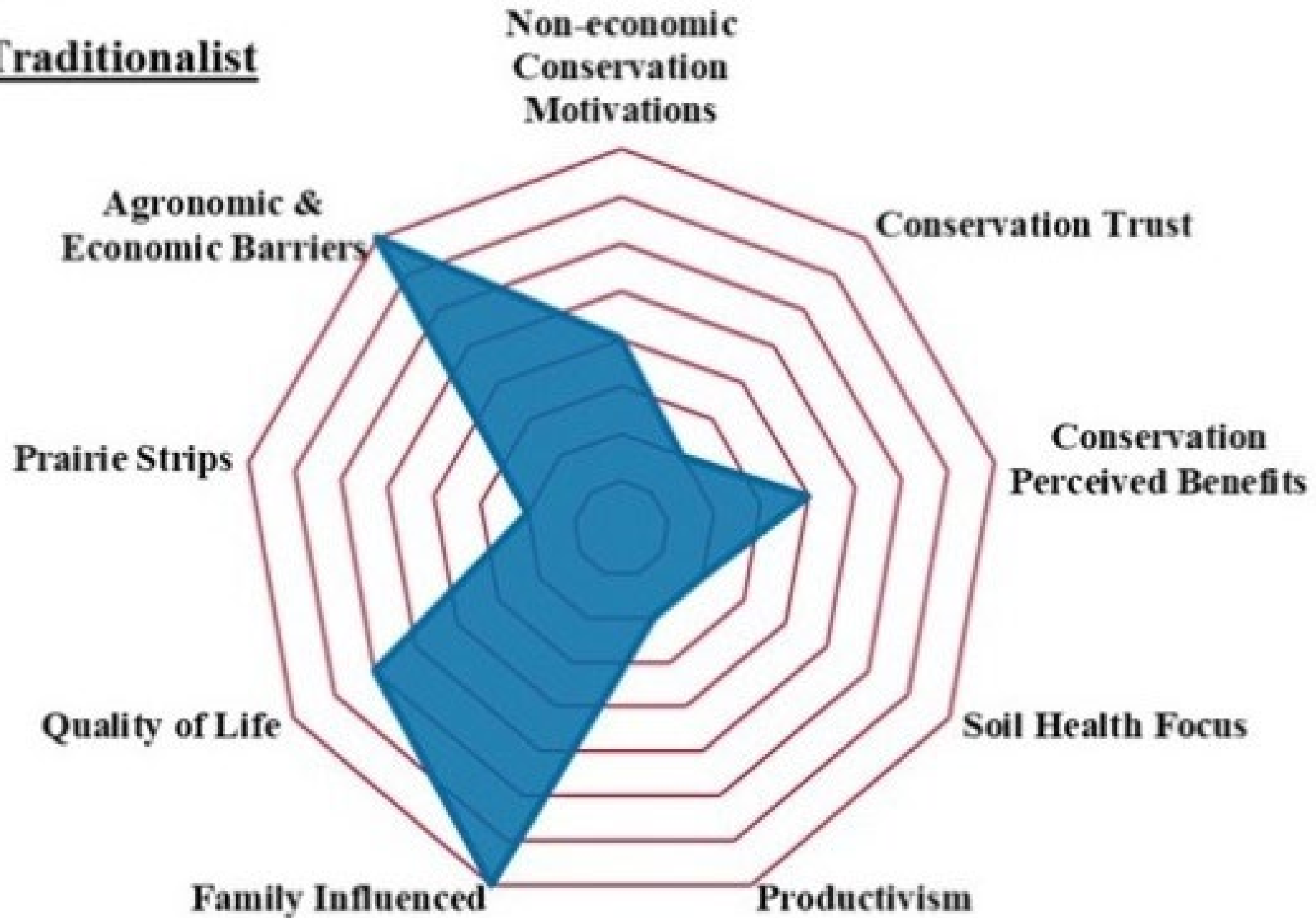
Productivist

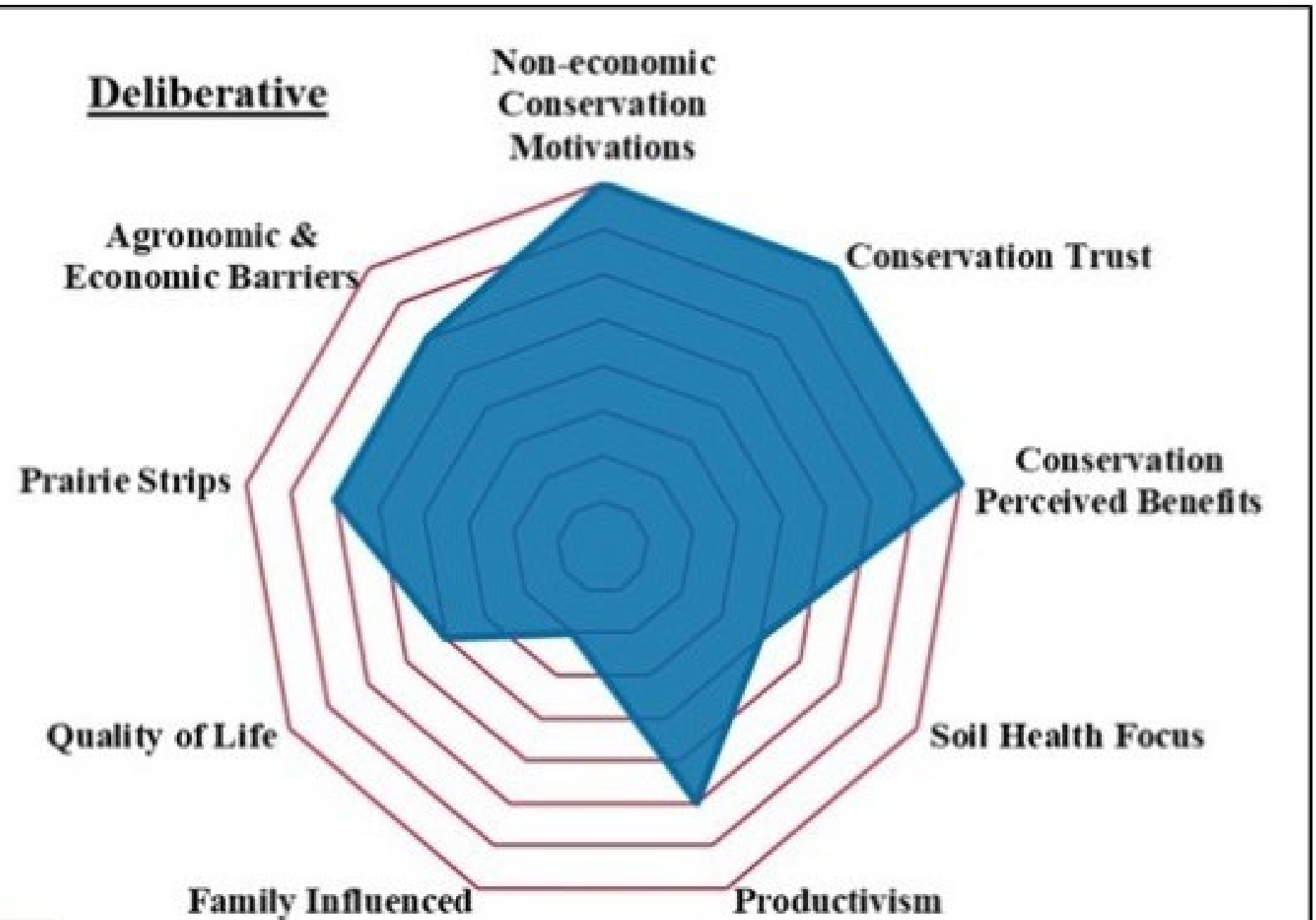
Traditionalist

Conservationist

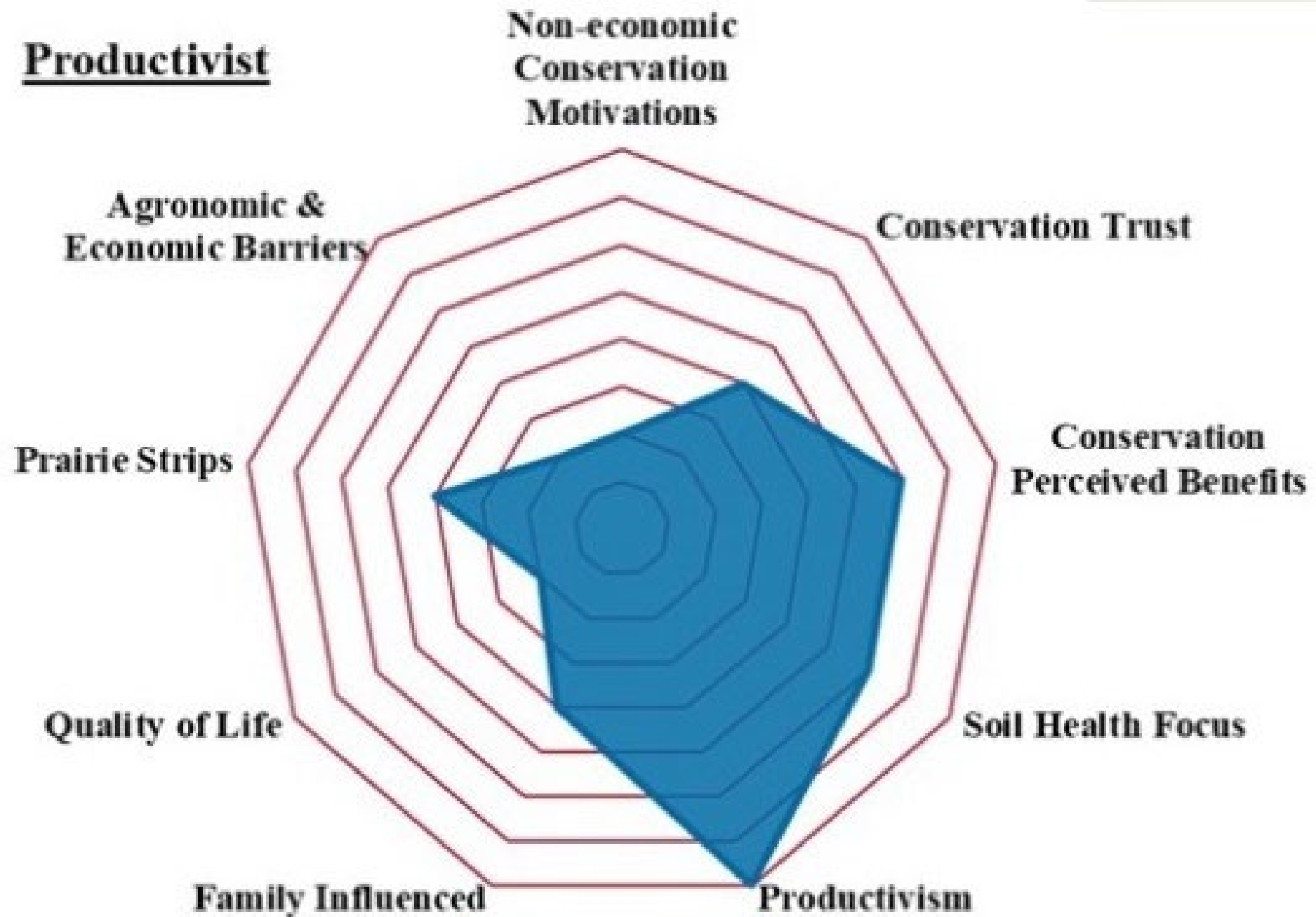


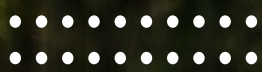
Traditionalist





Productivist





Before the
conversation

Check my
perception:

Do I respect them?

Knowledge

Wellbeing

Value



All conversations are with myself, and
sometimes they involve other people.

~Susan Scott



See the whole person

Suspend judgement

Assume positive intent

Stay humble

Check my perception

Am I curious?

Active listening - SLANT

- Sit or stand up
- Lean forward
- Ask questions
- Nod your head
- Track the speaker



Motivational Interviewing



“the interviewer has a guiding role The recipient is being served and ultimately is the one who decides what to change, if anything.

Not about *installing* motivation in people, but *evoking* it from them.”

Want to understand:

1

Who is this
person?

2

What do
they want
to see
change?

3

What role
can they
see
themselves
play?



Listening for change talk

- **Desire:** *I want to change*
- **Ability:** *I can change*
- **Reasons:** *These are my reasons for changing*
- **Need:** *I need to change*
- **Commitment:** *I will start engaging in a new behavior*
- **Activation:** *I am considering change*
- **Taking Steps:** *I will/have started to take steps towards change*



Open-ended questions



Show curiosity

How did you...

Why...

Tell me more...

What's it like...

And then what happened?

Reflections



Simple reflection = simple restatement

Complex reflection = additional content (reflect meaning or feeling)



Affirmations



strengths
values
goals



Farmer 1: ***Crop prices are terrible this year, how do you expect me to stay in business if I worry about all this environmental stuff?***

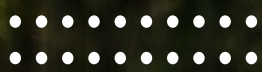
Volunteer – open-ended question

Farmer 2: ***No doubt you are trying your best, but how do I know that you have the most accurate information?***

Volunteer – affirmation

Farmer 3: ***There is just so much confusing information out there. I've got too much to do to sort through it all.***

Volunteer – reflection



Going with the flow: Having a Conversation

Conversation Tasks

Engaging

Get to know the person

Focusing

Identify a collaborative focus for the conversation

Evoking

Evoke and reinforce statements about change

Planning

If appropriate, develop a plan

Engaging: start with the familiar

- Weather
- Sports
- Community
- Crop progress (if good)
- Equipment



Introduce yourself

First 30sec story (credibility + honesty)

Focusing

Identify the issue

- What is the most important thing we should talk about today?
- What are your biggest challenges around (mutually interested topic from pitch)

Clarify the issue

- Tell me more about how this situation developed?
- What is going on? How long?





Ask-Offer-Ask

- **Ask** the person what they already know about the topic
- Reflect/affirm
- Ask for permission to share more information
- If yes, **offer** 1 piece of information
- **Ask** what the person thinks about this information
- Only do couple times in a conversation

Evoking change



Current impact	How is this impacting you? Your family? Your farm? The community? What results is this currently producing? What crossroads are you currently at?
Future implications	If nothing changes, what are the implications? What is at stake for you? the farm? Your community? What would you try if there wasn't any risk? When you consider these possible outcomes, how do you feel?
Examine contributions	Who are all the stakeholders? Which pieces do they control? How have you personally contributed?
Vision	What legacy do you want for your farm? What difference will this change make? What results will you enjoy? Your family? Your farm? The community? When you contemplate these results, what do you feel?



Commit to action



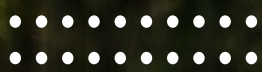
- What is your next step? My next step is...
- I will ...
- What might get in our way and how will we get past it?
- When will we follow up?
- Would you like to sign up for...?
- Who else should we get involved?



Discussion:

Be brave enough to start a
conversation that matters. —
Margaret Wheatley



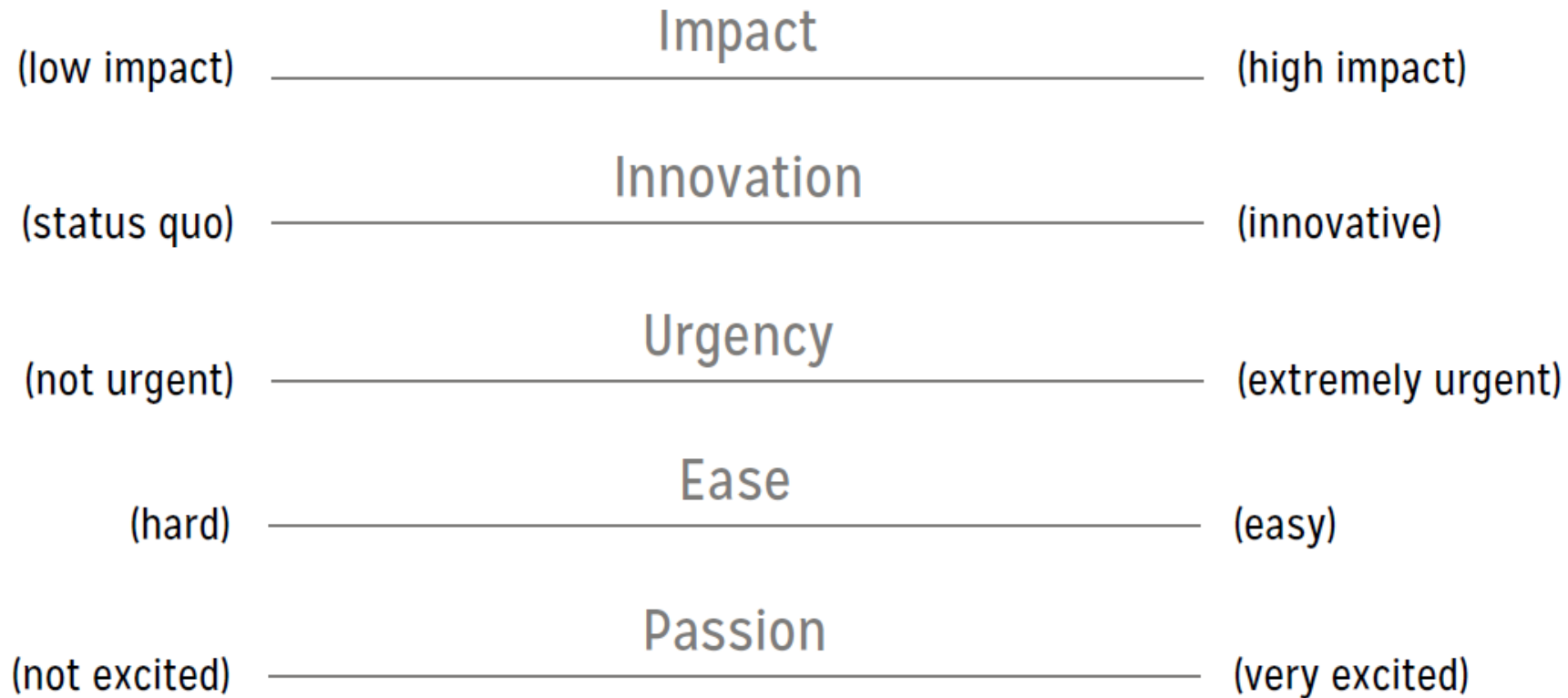


Building the Story of Now: Understanding the issue

Why this?
Why now?



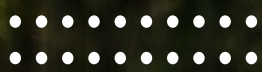
Choosing the action





Practice analysis: Benefits & Barriers

Relative advantage	Benefits vs cost of change
Compatibility:	How does the change fit previous values, experiences
Simplicity:	Is the change easy to implement
Trialability:	Can the change be tried in a low-risk way
Observability:	Can the results be easily seen



Module 2: Influencing change



Change happens at the speed of trust. -- *Stephen Covey*



Ineffective change methods:



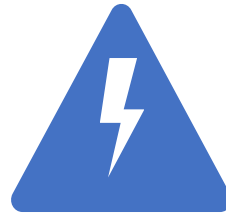
Knowledge deficit

“If you just understood more”



Blame & shame

“This is terrible, how could you”



Power “Because I said so”



Expert “I know better than you”



Bribery “I’ll pay you to do it my way”



Expand our Toolbox

A methodical approach to look at:

- beliefs
- habits
- culture
- status quo
- biases
- resistance



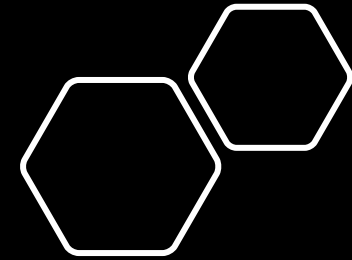
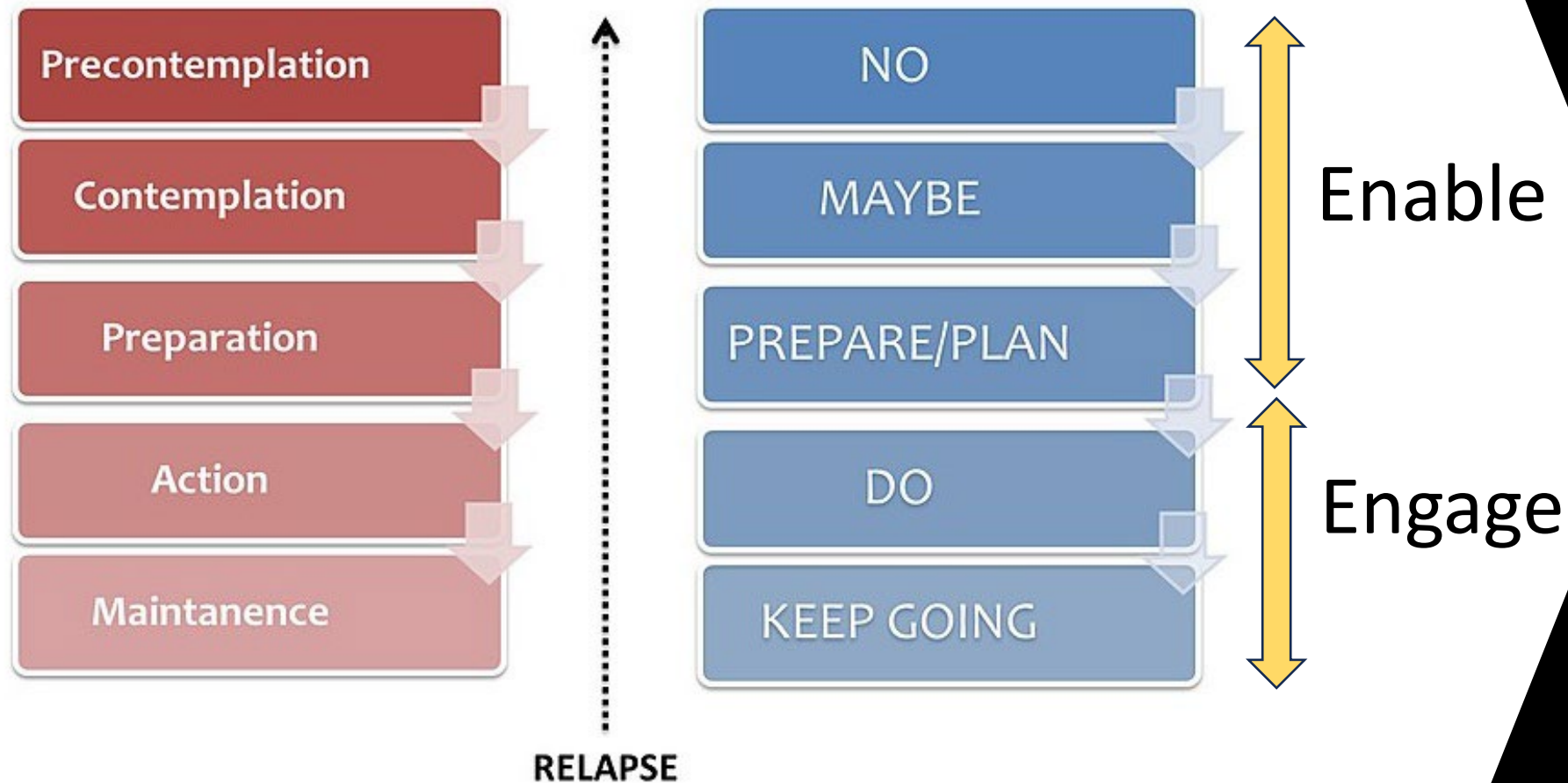
How do we change?



Decisions engage our whole being



Individual change

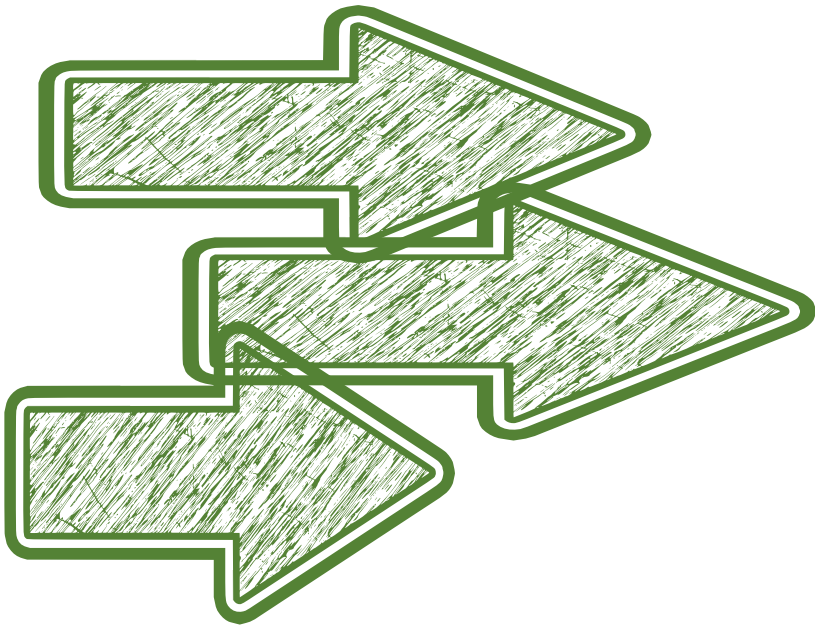




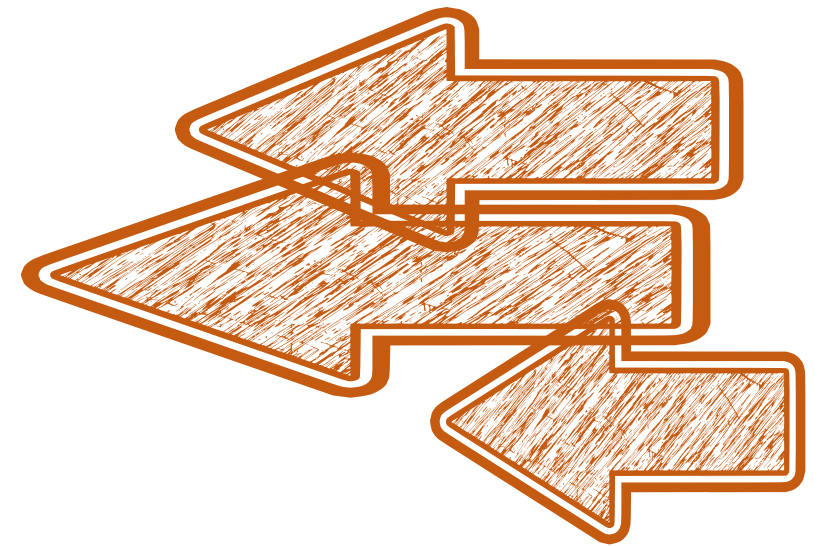
Influencing change



Benefits + Dissatisfaction > Barriers



Change

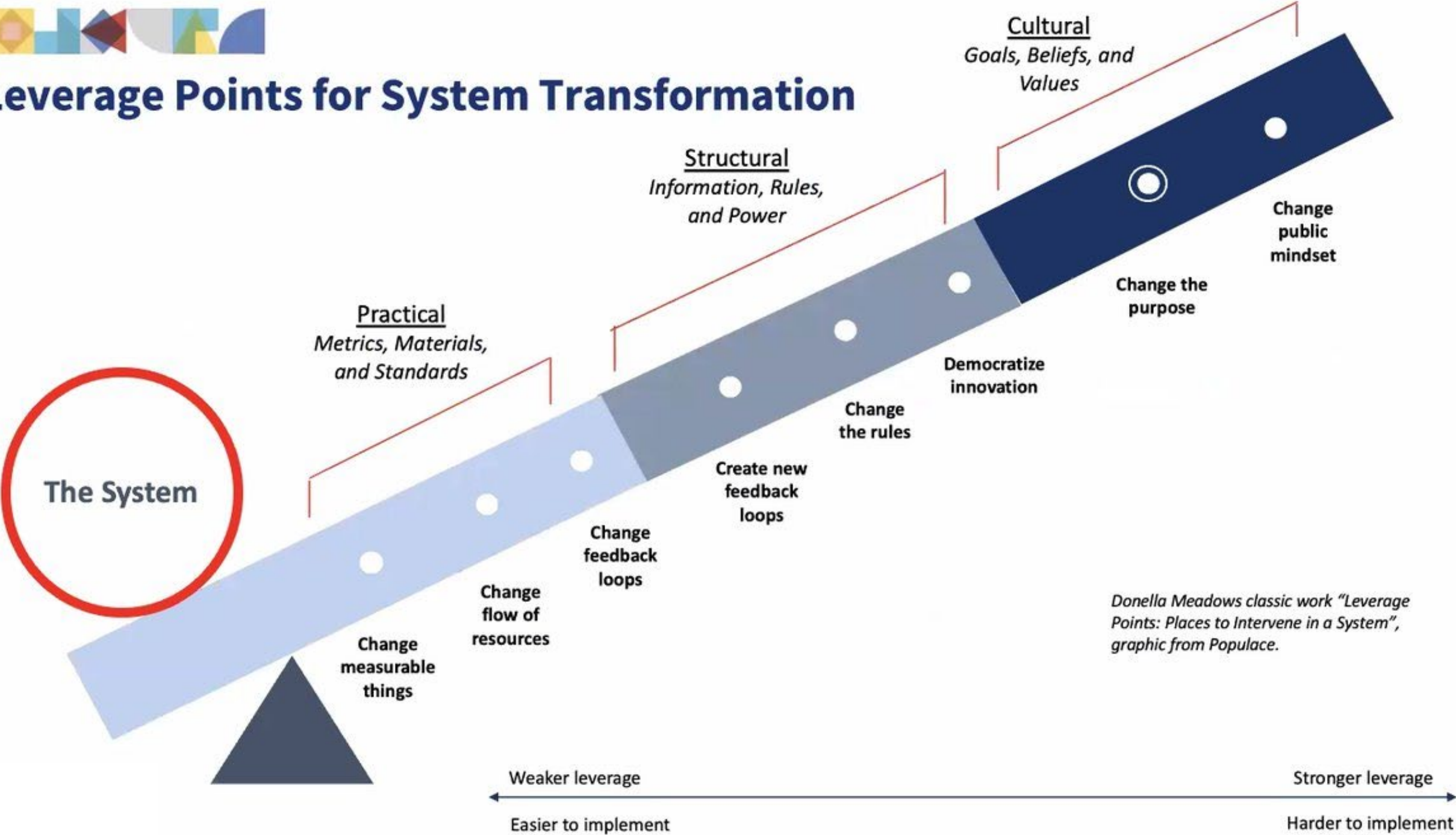


“Our job is to create a healthy dissatisfaction with the status quo.”

~ S. Melvin



Leverage Points for System Transformation

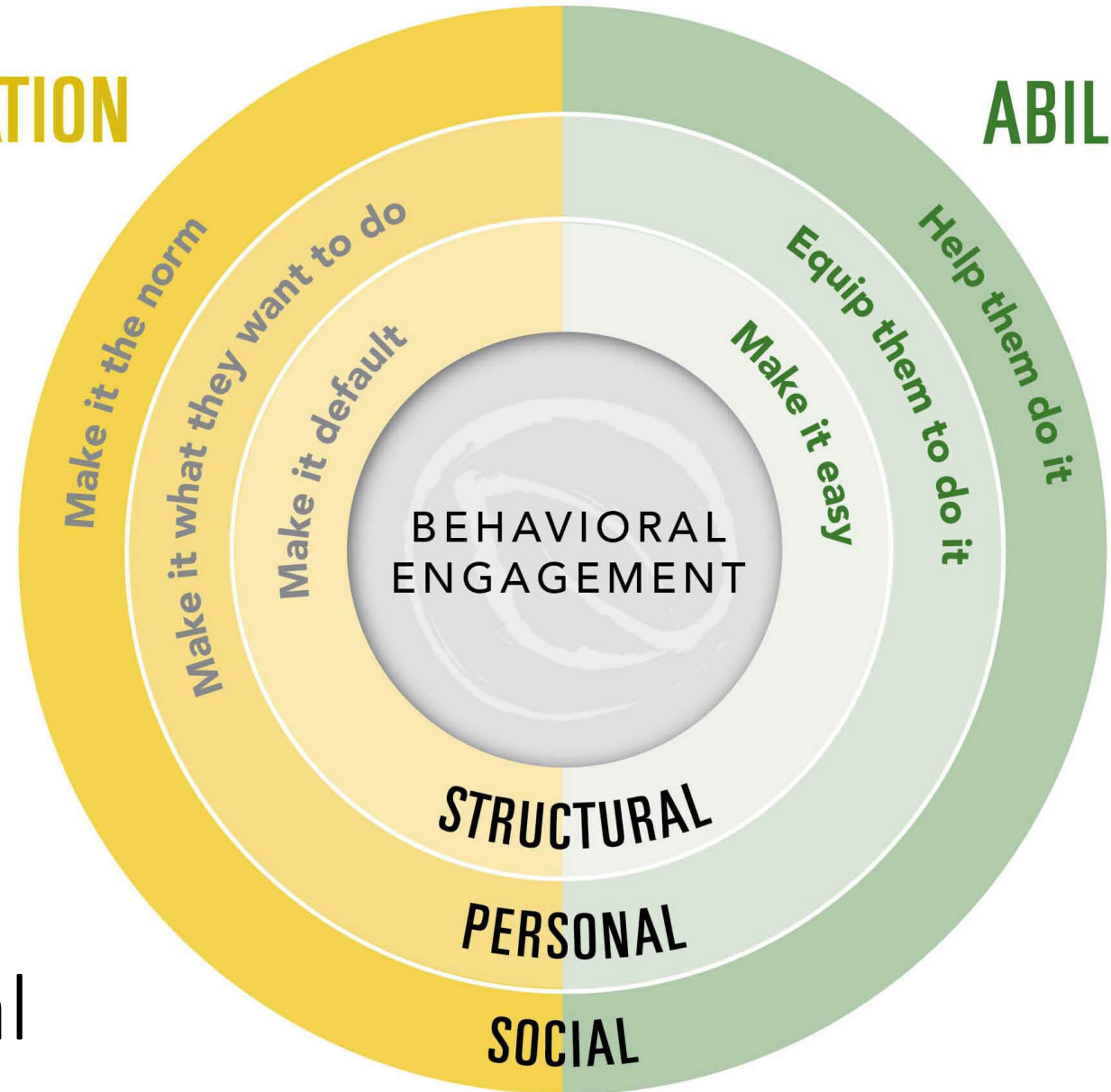


Donella Meadows classic work "Leverage Points: Places to Intervene in a System", graphic from Populace.



MOTIVATION

ABILITY



Influencing Individual
Change

A person wearing a teal hooded jacket and black leggings is running away from the camera on a paved path. The background is a bright, hazy sunset or sunrise over a body of water, with a bridge visible in the distance. The overall mood is motivational and serene.

Motivation

Do they want to do it?

Herzberg's Motivation - Hygiene Theory

Motivators



Achievement



Recognition



The Work
Itself



Responsibility



Advancement



Growth

Demotivators



Bureaucracy
(Corporate policies,
Supervision)



Relationships



Work
Conditions



Status



Salary



Job Security

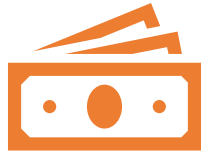


Place-based conservation ag motivators

- Vulnerable land
- Adjacent to a waterbody
- Larger farm size

Structural motivation:

Align rewards & accountability



**Rethink
incentives**

Loss adverse



Recognition



**Regulations &
legal**

Social motivation:

Make it the norm



Social norms

Influential advisors

Known as ...

Benchmarks



Commitments

Written

Verbal

Public



Achievement



Proven social motivators of conservation

Institutions providing information and guidance

- Particularly staff that go above & beyond
- Following up with producers one-on-one

(Popovici et al. 2023, Baumgart-Getz et al. 2012; Liu et al. 2018)

Local leadership

Presence of industry experts, advocates & entrepreneurs

(Popovici et al. 2023, Arbuckle and Roesch-McNally 2015; Moore et al. 2016; Bowman and Lynch 2019; Ranjan et al. 2019)

Collaboration

(Popovici et al. 2023)



Personal motivation:

Connect to values & identity



Curiosity and wonder

Seeker & user of information



Identity

I am a...
steward, 'good' farmer,
hunter, Nebraskan, hero
of my story...



Growth

Growth mindset:
'I don't know how, YET'



Learning stewardship values: Nature Legacy Framework

	Nature Bonding Chawla 1998, 2002, 2007	Place Connection Manzo 2003, Proshansky 1978, Sobel 1996	Nature Identity Stryker & Burke 2000, Stets & Biga 2000
Involves/Looks like	Regular engagement in nature Comfort, confidence in nature “I love being in nature”	Familiarity with the nature world Emotional connectedness to nature “I know a special place”	Social belonging with others in nature Family role model or caring-adult ally in nature “I am a nature person too”
Teaching practices	Inspire awe Seek simplicity Take time Involve the senses	Link prior experiences Allow free expression Encourage thinking Focus on experience	Involve family Share yourself Prompt interactions Build social trust/agency

Innovator identity





Ability

Can they do it?

Structural ability: *Make it easy*



Infrastructure

Automate

Provide equipment
or expertise



Cues & Reminders

Social ability: *support*



Social efficacy: “We can do it!”

We can control

Enough people to make
progress

Meaningfully contribute
to solving the challenge



Peer-to-peer learning



Personal ability: *skill building*



Self efficacy:
I can do it!

control

risk

time

equipment

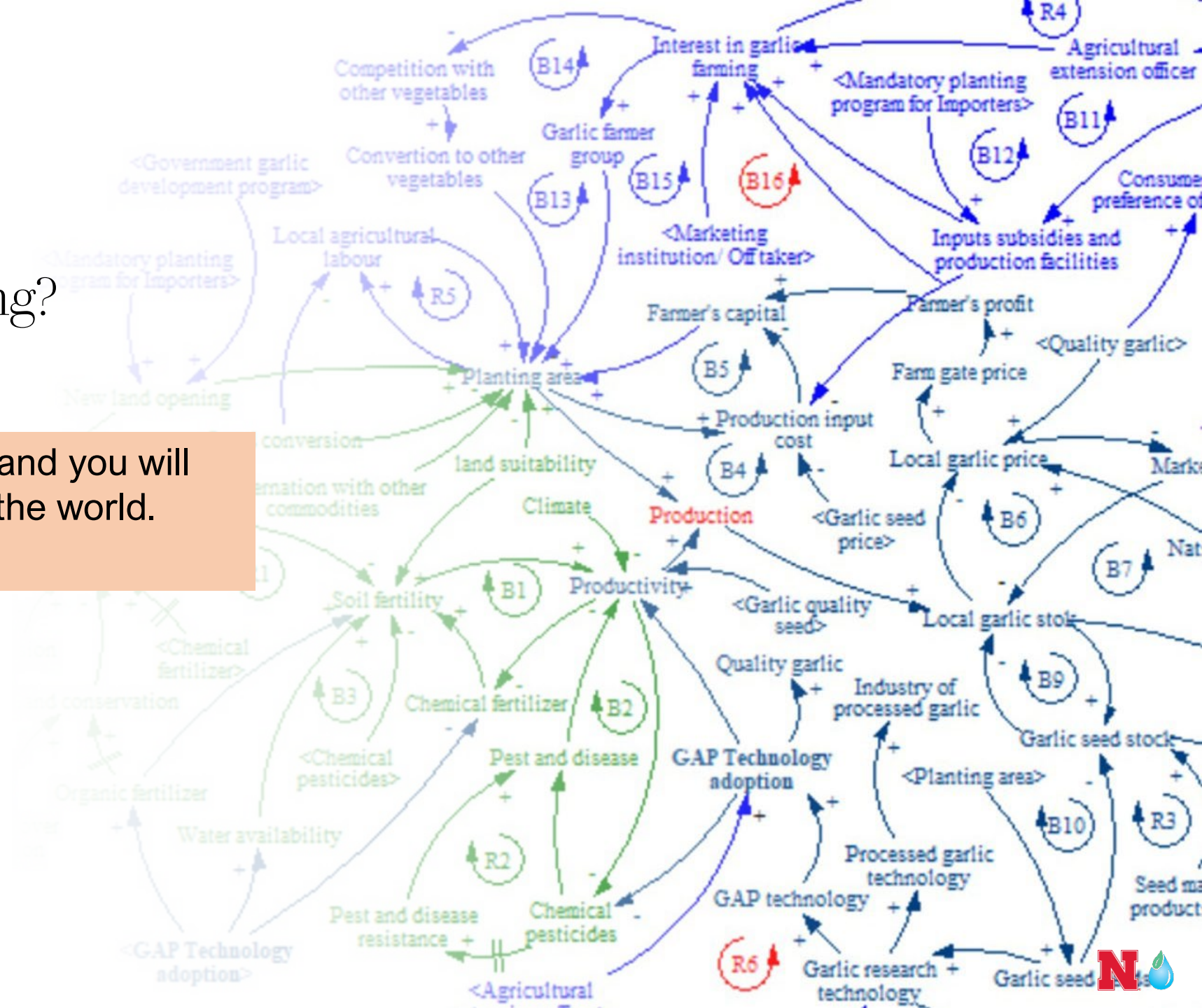
knowledge



**Systems
thinking**

Page 10 of 10

“Tug on a single thing in nature and you will find it connected to the rest of the world.”
~John Muir



Teaching systems thinking: NRCS Conservation planning

- Increased adoption of practices.
- Conservation planning process promotes system-based farming approaches.
- Part of the benefit is building a trusted relationship through ongoing, face-to-face conversation.

WE CHANGE BEST

.....

**BY FEELING GOOD,
NOT BY FEELING BAD.**

.....

-BJ FOGG

.....



Module 3: Clarifying Messages

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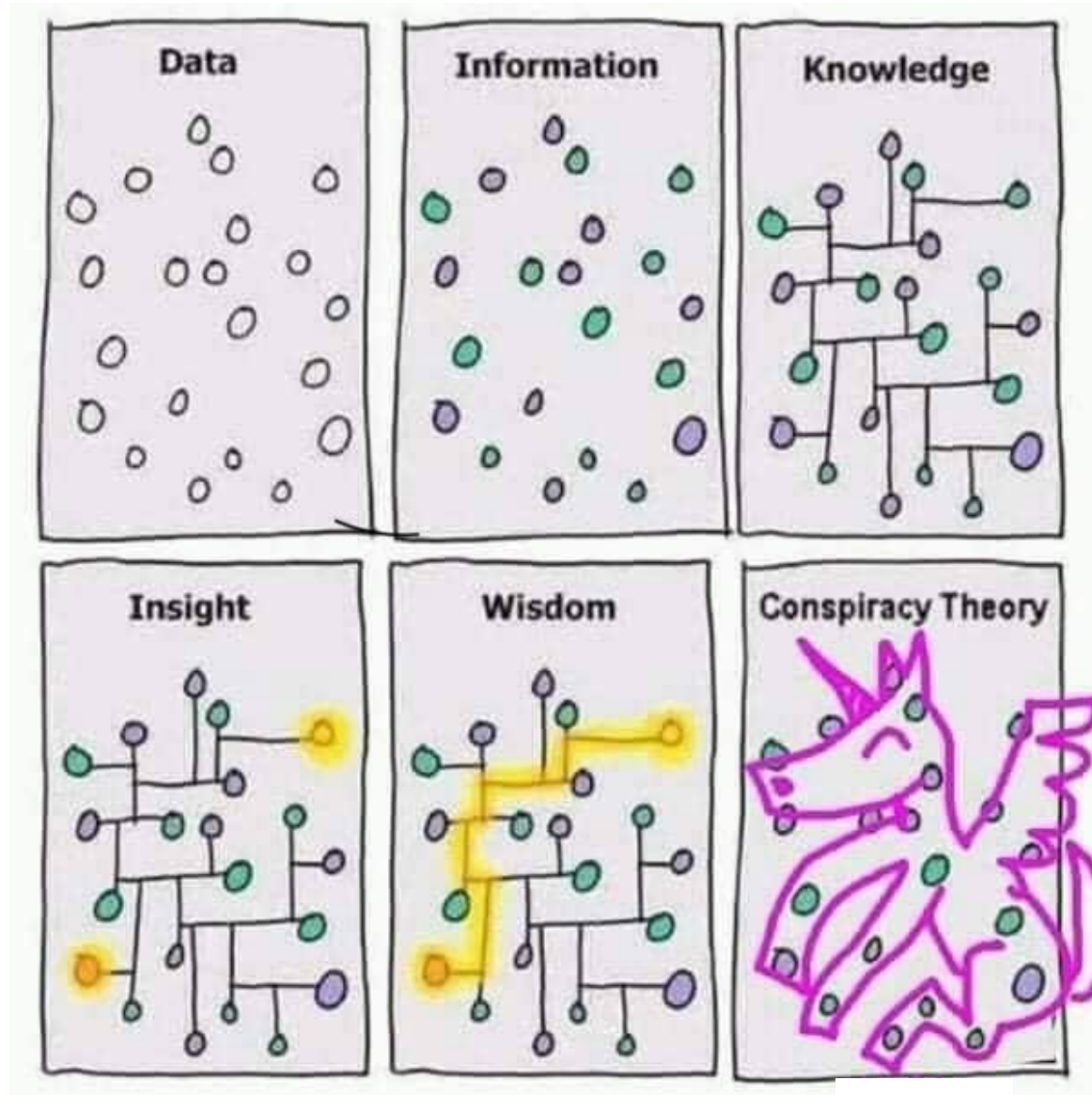
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OUR TASK:
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“The world as we know it is built on a story. To be a change agent is, first, to disrupt the existing story of the world, and second, to tell a new story of the world so that people have a place to go.”

~Charles Eisenstein



“The Lady and the Unicorn” 1484-1500 (Photo: [Wikimedia Commons](#))



Communication design

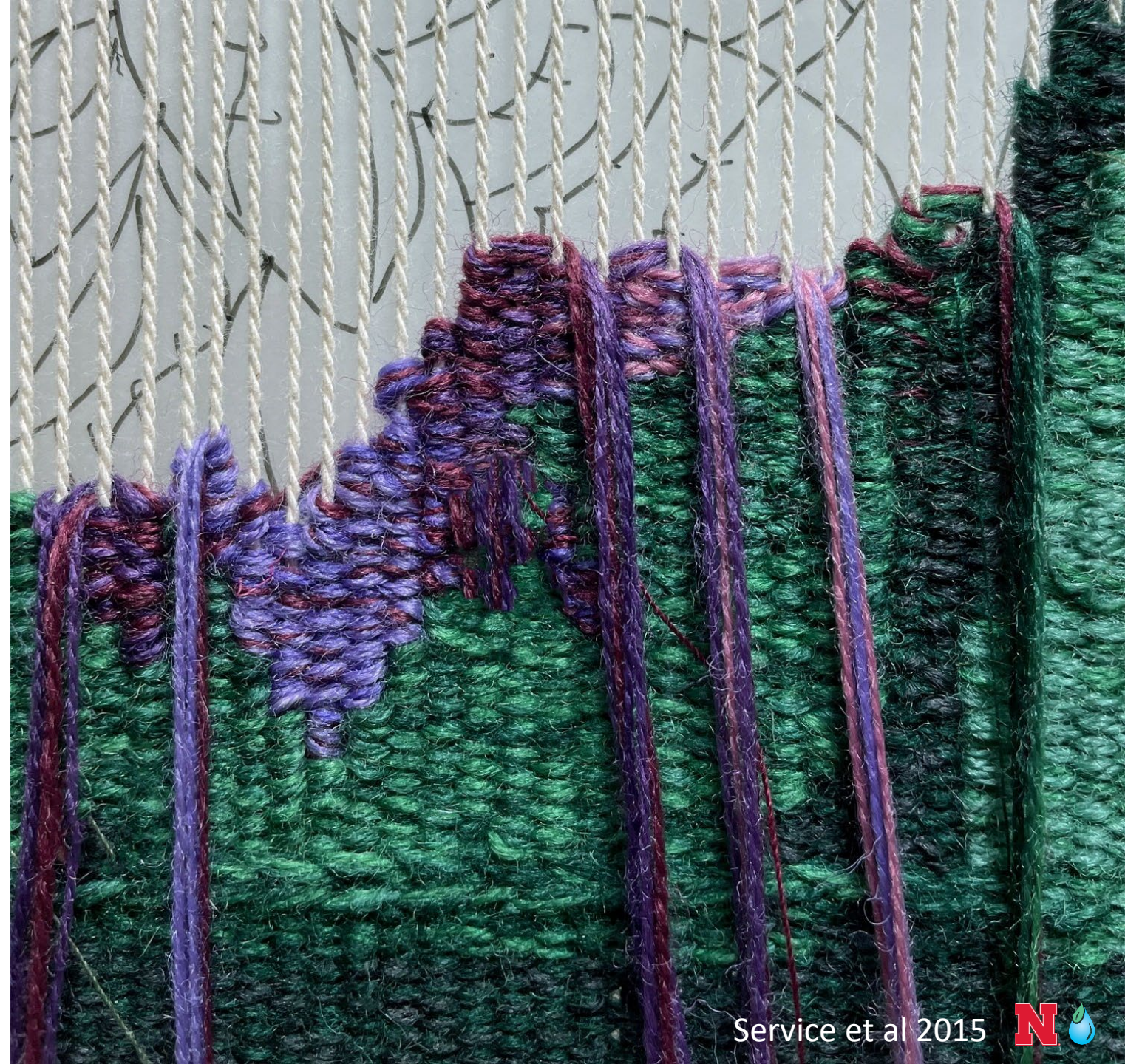
- E Easy
- A Attractive
- S Social
- T Timely



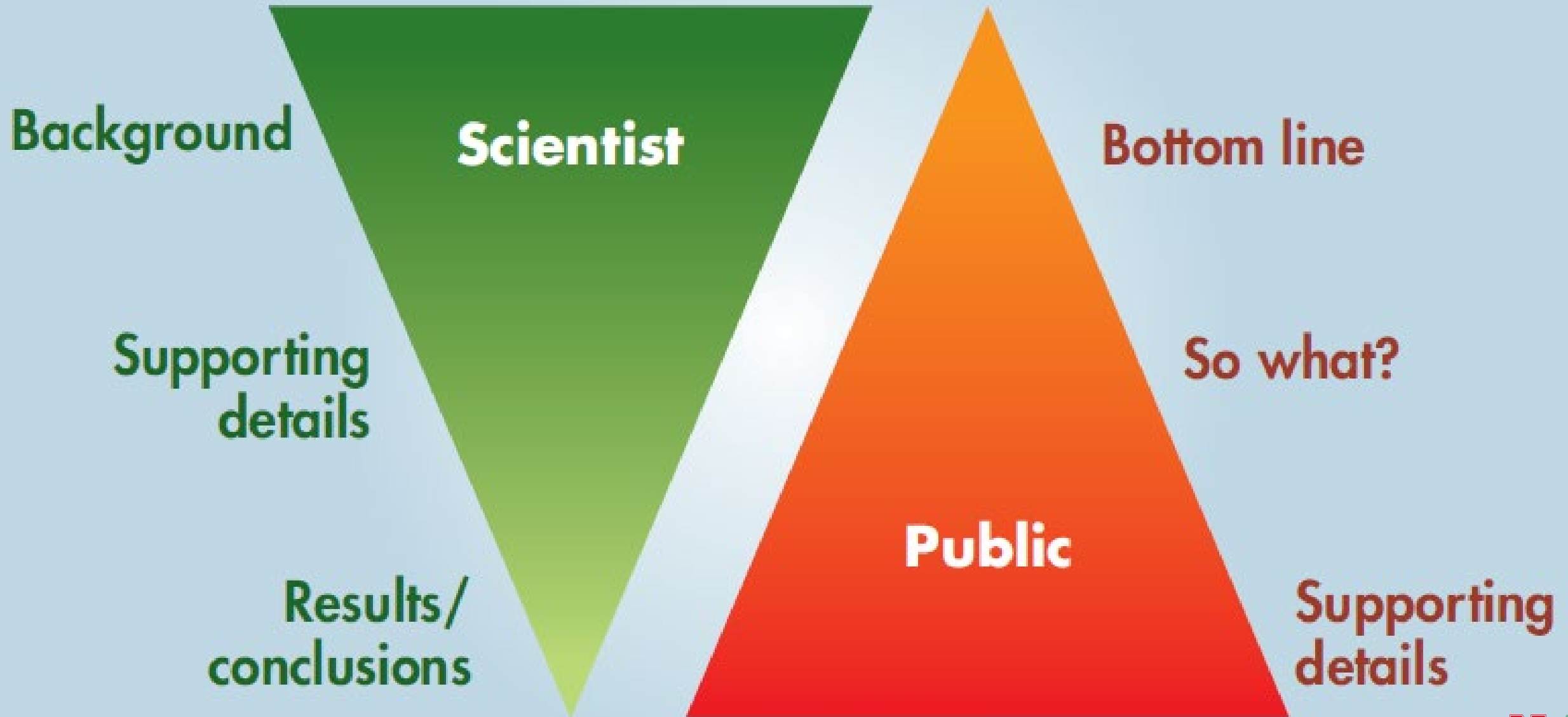


Communication design

- E EASY
- A Attractive
- S Social
- T Timely




Main Point First



Avoid Jargon



Oklahoma Department of Wildlife Con...  @OKWildlif... · Feb 22 ...

The problem isn't ripped zebras, but the zebras that are ripping up the environment. Let zebra muscles stay in the gym, but keep zebra mussels out of the lakes our native species call home. Learn more at wildlifedepartment.com/fishing/ans



 12

 71

 692

 31.3K





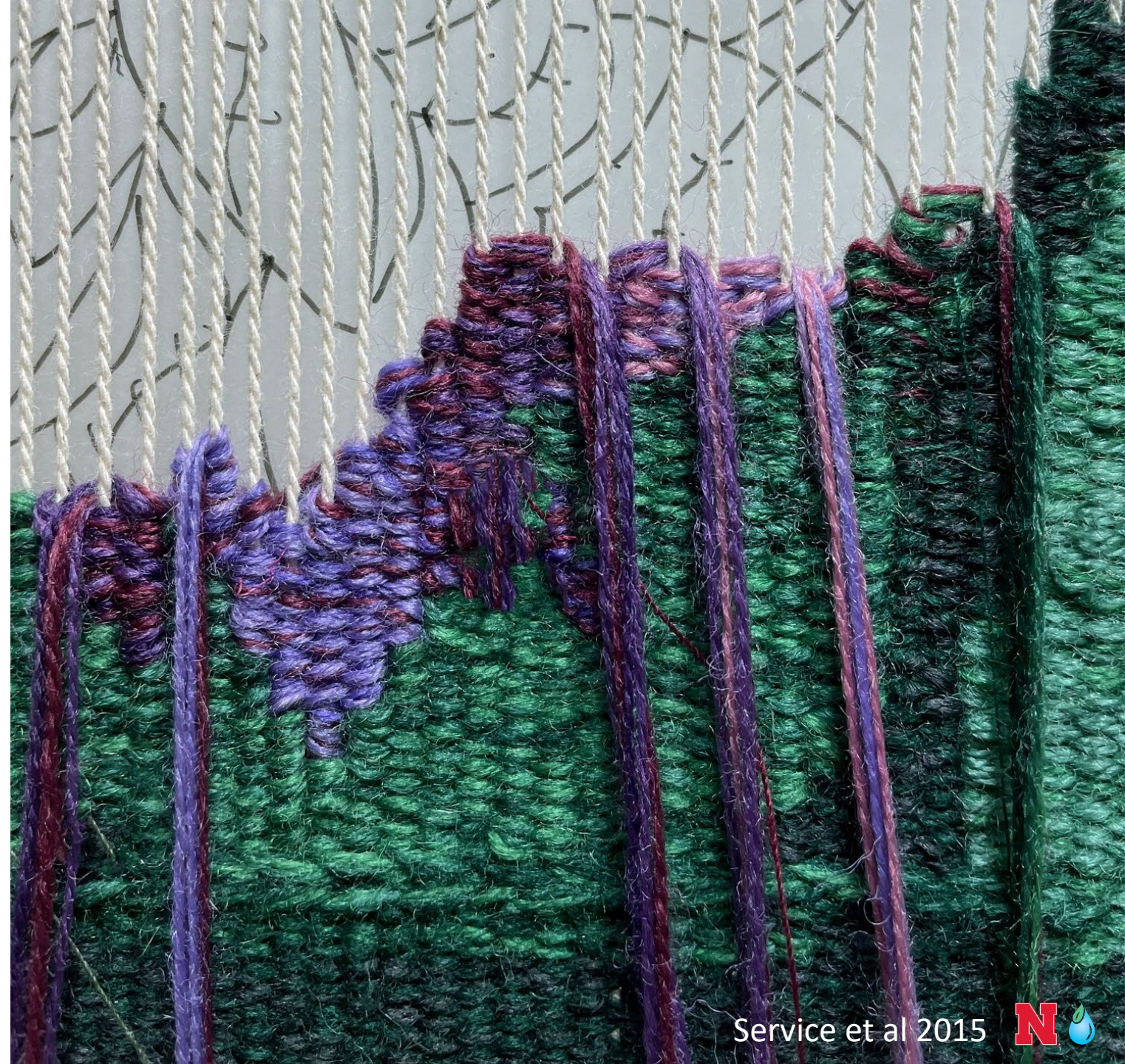
Communication design

E Easy

A ATTRACTIVE

S Social

T Timely



Tell aspirational stories

Hero's journey: hero, villain, victim

Struggle: costs/ challenges

Know the cultural context

Framing

interpretive storylines that set a specific train of thought in motion, communicating why an issue might be a problem, who or what is responsible for it, and what should be done”



Message frames

- What you choose to say (or not say) & how you say it
- Focus attention and make it relevant
- Try to fit THEIR existing beliefs, values, and motivations

Five moral frames

Binding

- Purity (sanctity/degradation): protect valued objects, people, places, principles.
- Authority: respecting traditions, social hierarchies. Doing your duty.
- Loyalty (ingroup): showing allegiance to family, country, group. Condemning traitors.

Individual

- Care/harm: preventing suffering of people, places
- Fairness/cheating: justice, treatment of people, places

Message framing examples

Binding

- Conserve our natural resources and protect our wildlife legacy. (WY)
- Conserving natural heritage to sustain our diverse economy and for the enjoyment of our citizens (MS).
- Public lands belong to you. (WY)
- Our outdoor sporting heritage is in jeopardy. (SD)

Individual

- Nature needs you. (MA) Voices for Wildlife. (VT)
- Conserving land does more than provide for wildlife, it protects us against climate change. (MA)
- Create an ecologically-sound future for species through education and political action. (VT)
- Connecting people with wildlife. (ME)
- Be an environmental leader. (NY)

Loss & Gain frames

Loss: result in a negative outcome

- Internal motivations
- People are loss adverse
- Often more persuasive & long lasting

Gain: results in positive outcome

- External motivations
- Strong for ingroup messages

Loss vs Gain

Loss

- Your farm profitability is at risk from wasted nutrients.
- If you don't do cover crops, you could lose your soil to erosion.

Gain

- Conservation can help you improve your bottom line.
- Cover crops can improve your soil health by keeping your soil from erosion.



Need ALL frames

Overuse of single frames can discourage both adopters AND non-adopters



Communication design

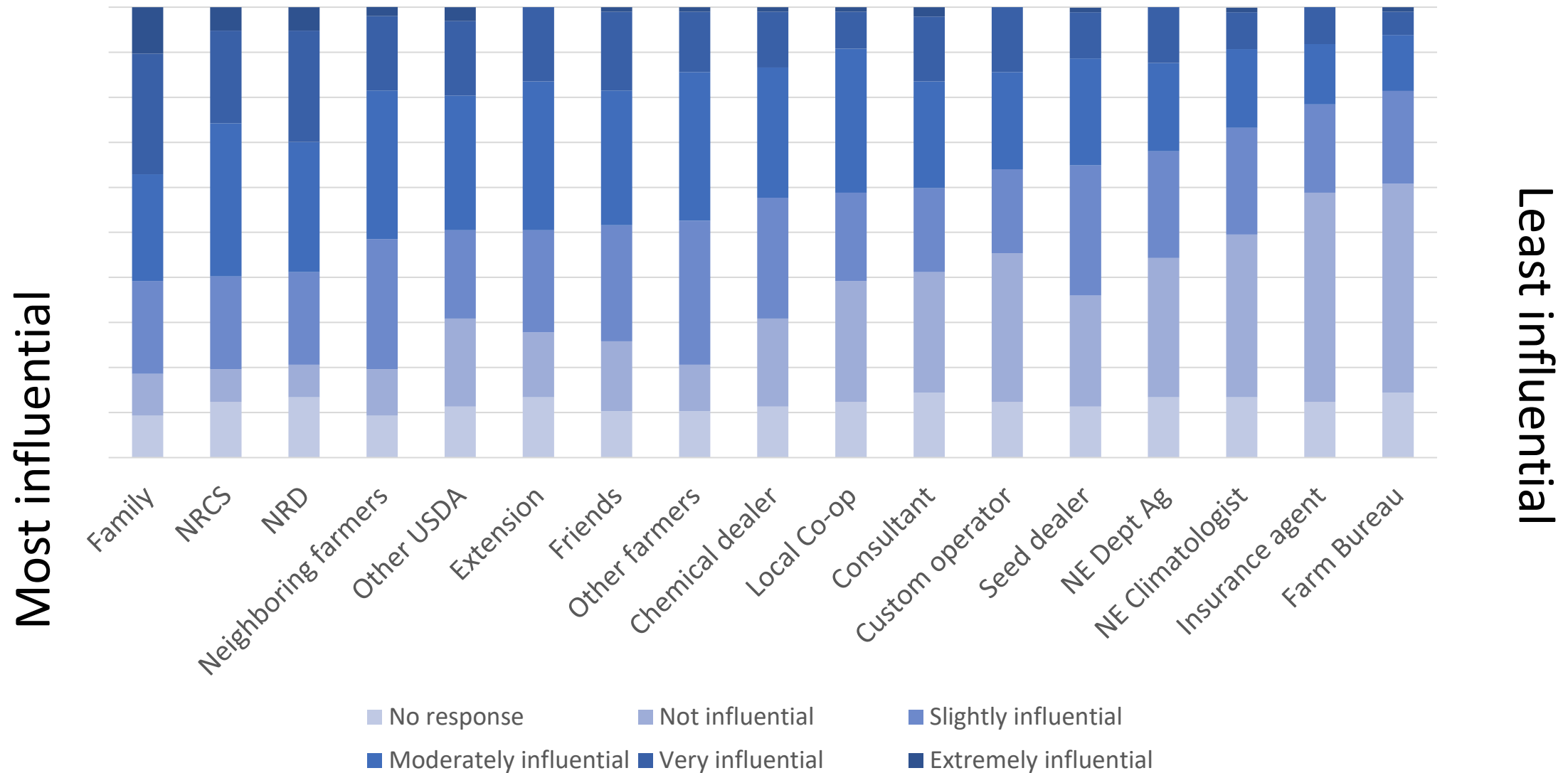
- E** Easy
- A** Attractive
- S** SOCIAL
- T** Timely



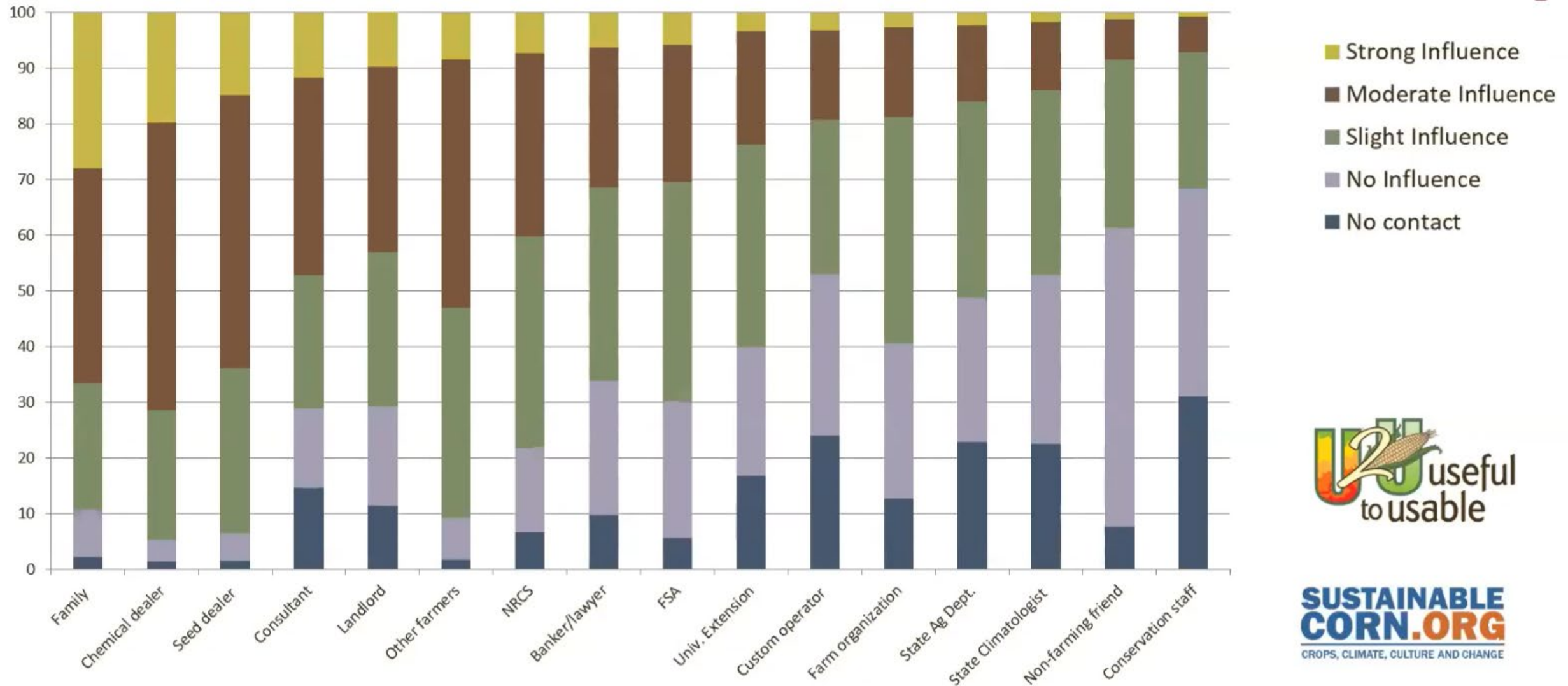
Who is the trusted messenger?

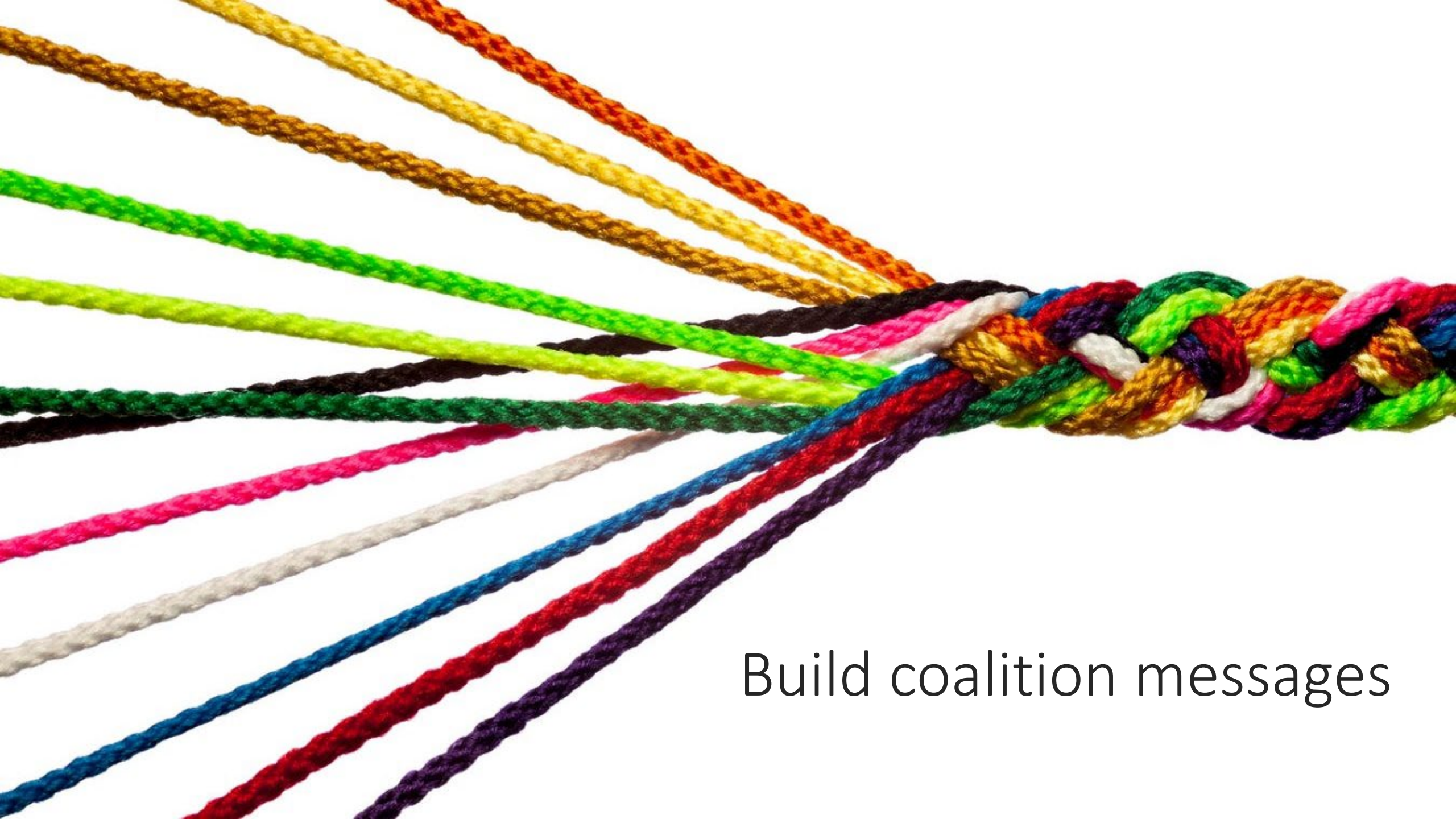


Influence **conservation** decisions



Influence agronomic decisions



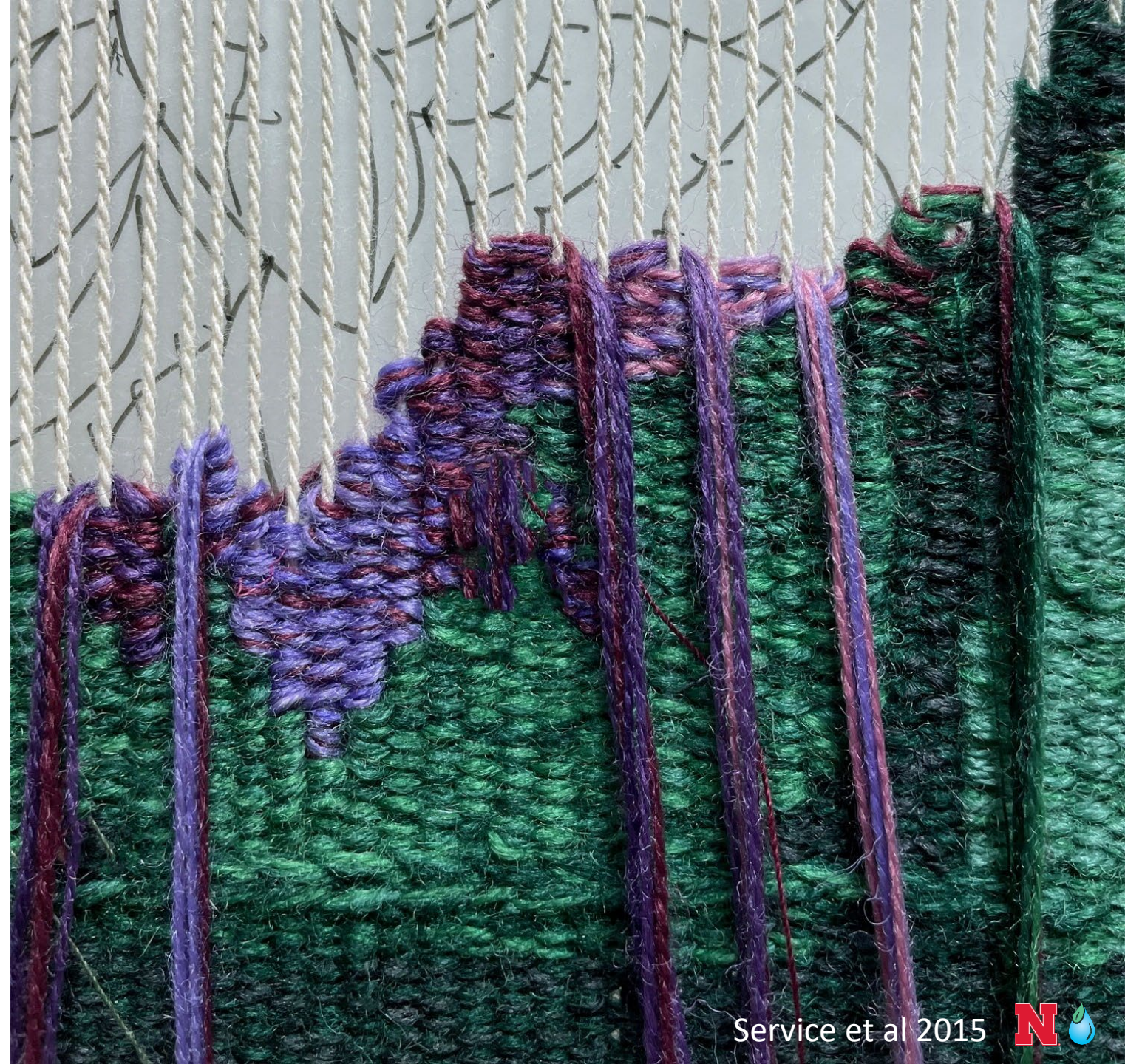


Build coalition messages

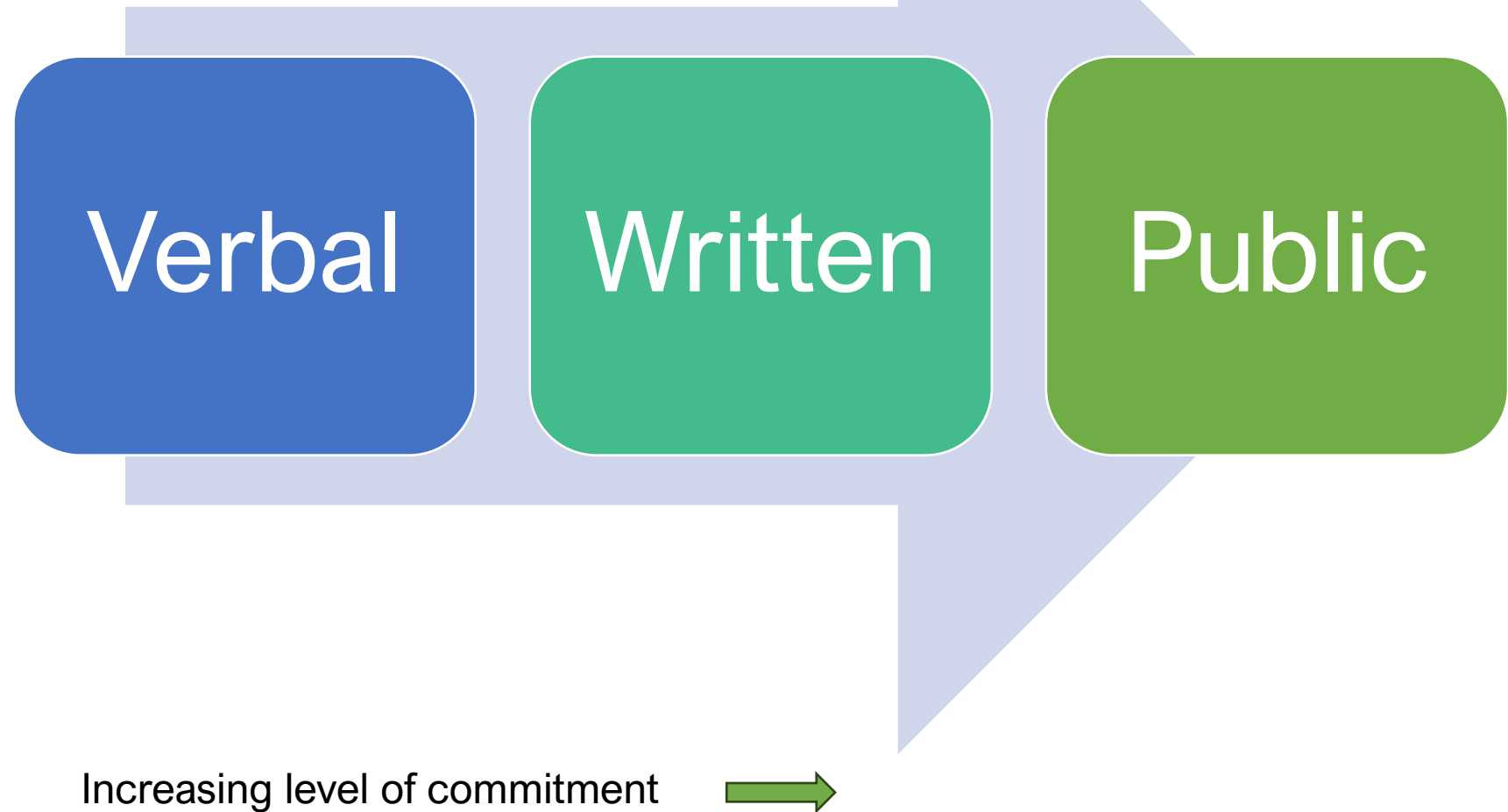


Communication design

- E** Easy
- A** Attractive
- S** Social
- T** **TIMELY**



Commit to action - today





Timely



NO-TILL

— November —

DO NOT  DISTURB



Ag Conservation Case studies

- H2Ohio: https://youtu.be/C5-g3GqtseQ?si=fHx_MPyUIU10x6-M
- Platte River: <https://vimeo.com/210489995>
- Soil Carbon Cowboys:
<https://youtu.be/3PpPmkSAiEw?si=XoJsmNxAfJKBveQF>
- Grassland 2.0: <https://www.youtube.com/@grassland2.085>



Module 4: Risk Communication





Tough questions &
misperceptions



Media interviews



Public meetings

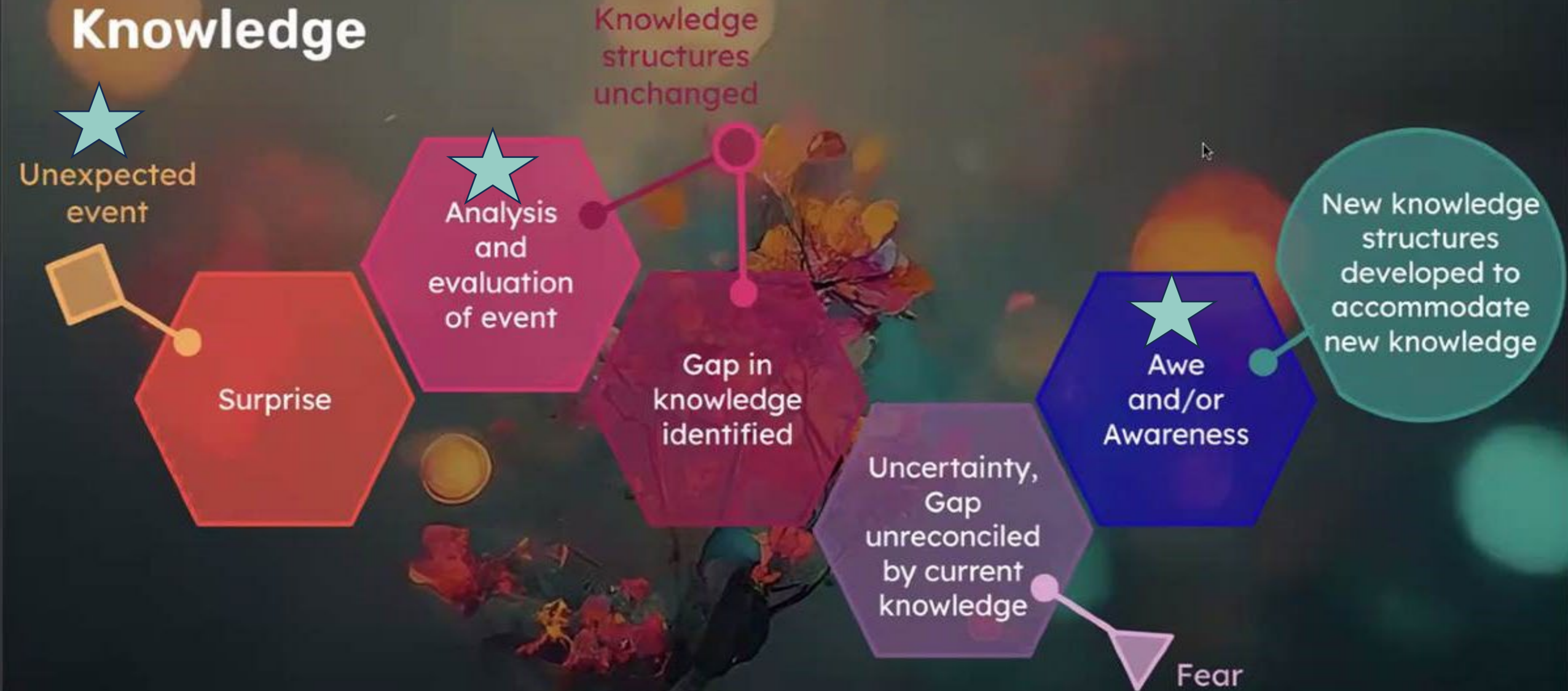


Be sincere; be brief; be seated.

Franklin D. Roosevelt

What negative messages are you hearing about conservation?

Wonder & Awe: Fundamentally Restructuring Knowledge



*“Change happens at
the speed of trust”*
~S. Covey



Calm the fears

Don't worry about the loud nay-sayers.

Your audience is the silent majority who are listening.

Take a deep breath



Connect as a person

Getting to know you is the best way to break stereotypes:

1. Share your experiences. “I”
2. Be genuine.
3. Partner with other trusted, local people.





Re-frame: Choose your own story

Practice re-framing:

“You are just trying to put me out of business” (corruption frame)

➤ I am here to serve farmers by providing options. (loyalty frame)

“Your recommendations are behind the times.” (irrelevant frame)

➤ Well-established standards to make sure we are providing accurate information. (tradition frame)

“This is just a socialist plan to control my farm.” (political frame)

➤ I am here to help protect the future of Nebraska’s farms & communities. (sanctity frame)



Strategically correct misinformation

- Explain what is true.
- Normalize and humanize.
- Warn against the fallacy.
- Unmask the disinformation tactic.

Come back to the aspirational story

What won't work

- 1. Don't avoid the topic.** The public needs to hear reasonable voices.
- 2. Don't over-analyze.** Be thoughtful, but address in the moment. As the saying goes “A lie can travel halfway around the world before the truth can get its boots on.”
- 3. Don't restate mistruths.** Restating myths, even to refute them, actually reinforces it in the brain.



Media relations



Meet their needs

- Do not ever lie
- If you cannot provide information, explain why
- Help them meet their deadlines
- Be succinct
- Be patient & help them understand

Interview prep

- You are always on the record
- Prepare, prepare, prepare
- Select best spokesperson
- Set time limit (~20min)

During the interview

- Stay on message
- Bridge back to key messages
- Realize the true audience is the public
- End with key messages



Public meetings



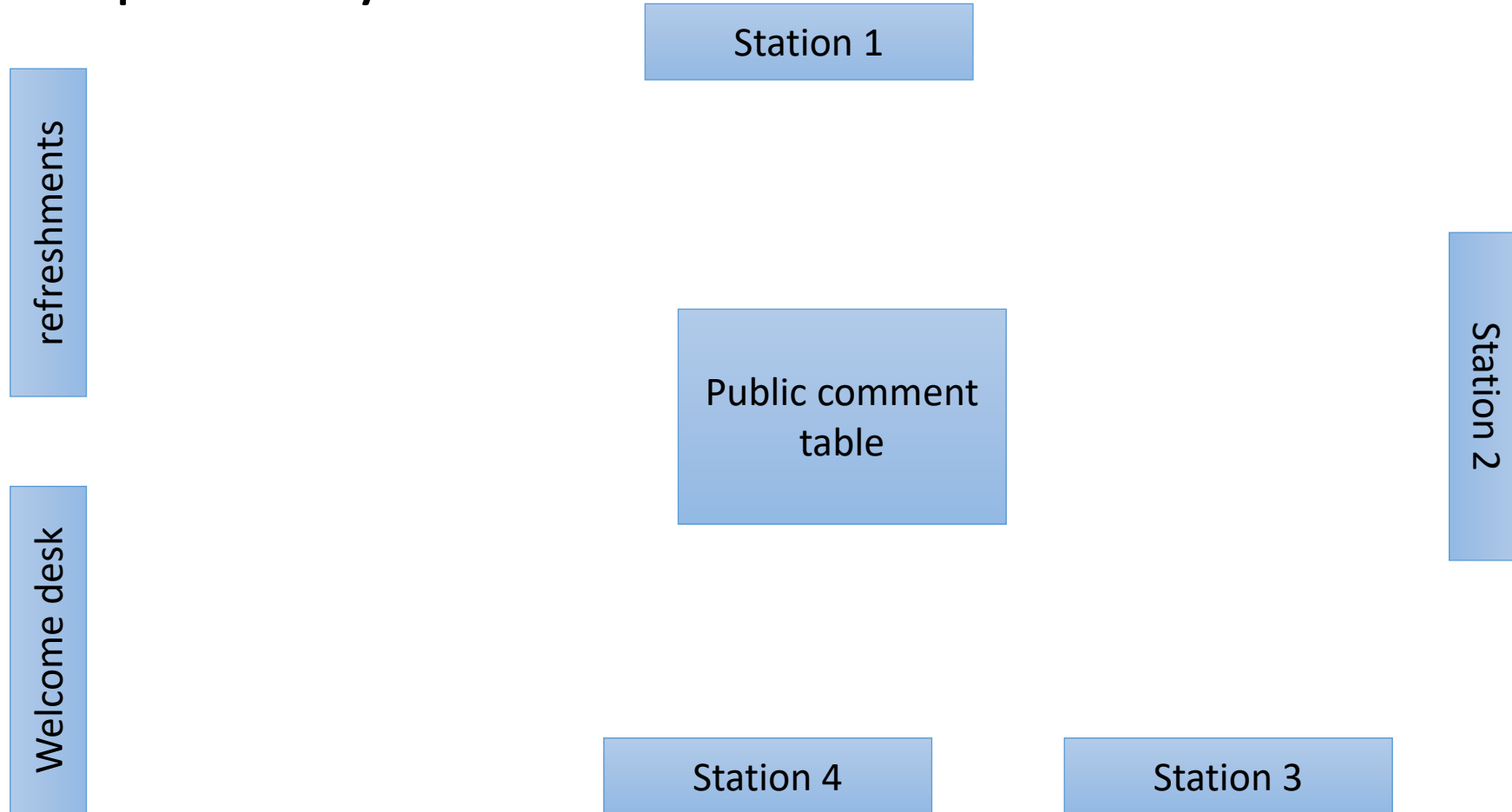
The traditional public forum

<https://youtu.be/ImMkKFstqwY?si=DTBGjC2Cl2PweOzd>

The Open House Forum

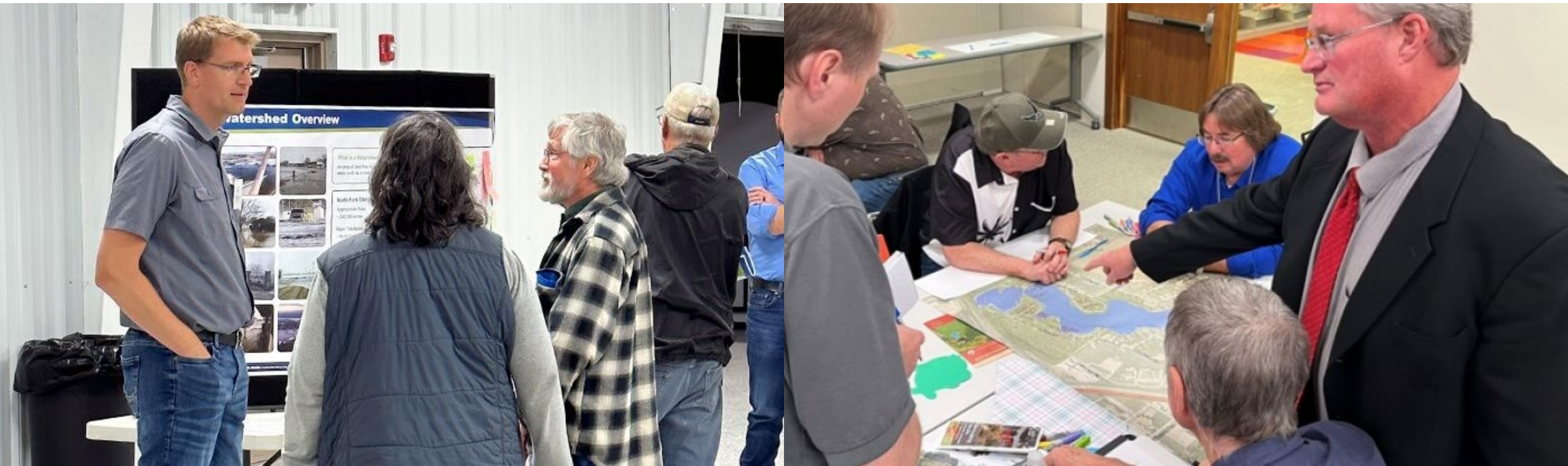


Example Layout



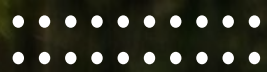
Three main exhibit stations

- Simple, descriptive graphics (maps, timelines, etc.)
- Expert to answer questions
- Handout with details



Additional stations

- Welcome: sign-in and assistance
- Comments: oral and written
- Refreshments
- Opposition
- Collaborators



Thank you!

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**Nebraska
Water Center**
Daugherty WaterforFood Global Institute



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