From Crisis to Clarity

Navigating Uncertainty through Scenario Positioning

Steve Zimmerman

May 13, 2026

spectrum nonprofit services

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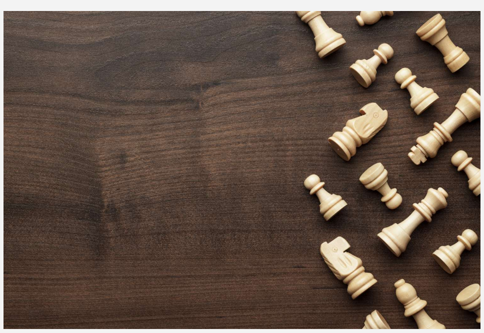
Welcome!



Our Conversation Today

- Introduction
- Scenario Positioning Framework
    - Assessing our Current Context
    - Community Influences
    - Strategic Menu of Options
    - Determining Next Steps
- Conclusion

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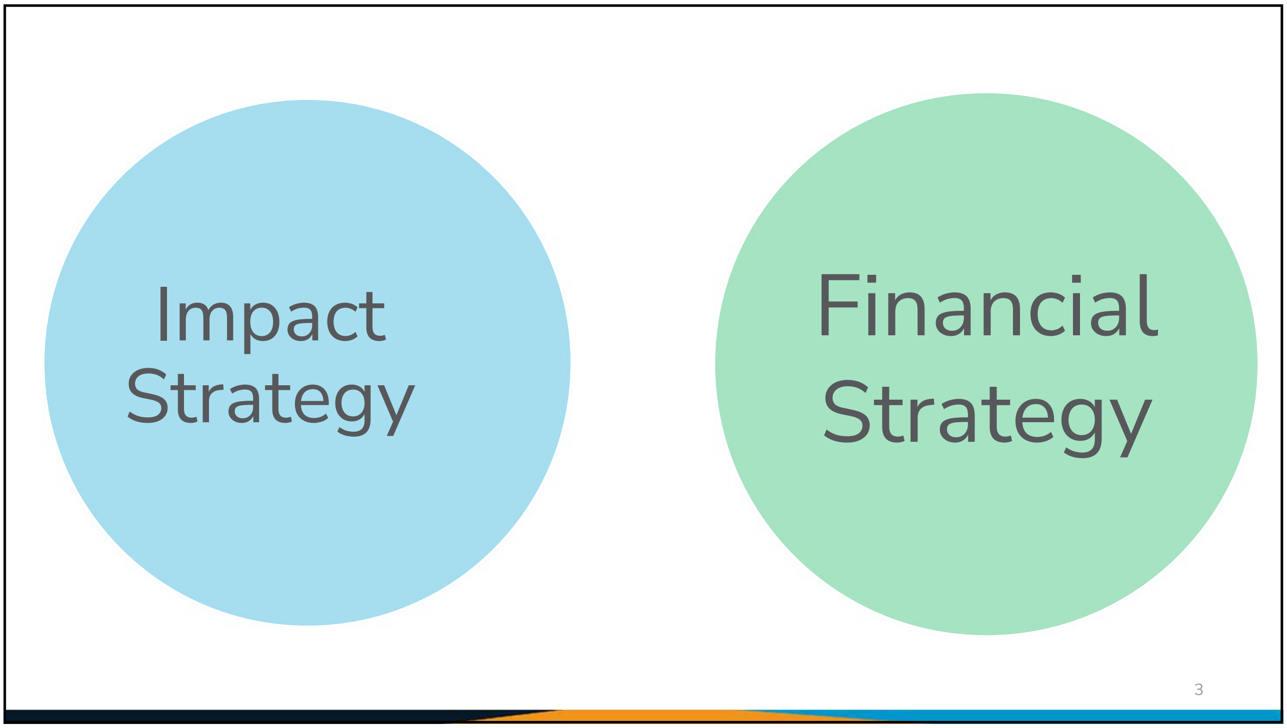
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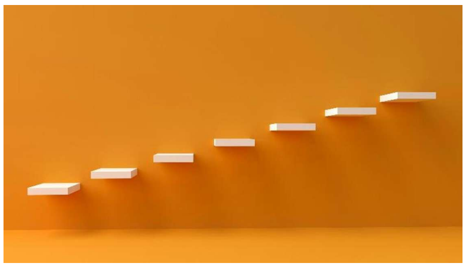
Scenario Planning



What is your current experience in scenario planning for your association?

Photo by Kanhaiya Sharma on Unsplash

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"This method works best for foreseen risks and stable uncertainties like inflation rate forecasts, the likelihood of a new competitor, or a substitute product entering the market. It often fails spectacularly when firms are hit by shocks outside of leaders' field of vision. And today, leaders are increasingly confronted with significant, and sometimes existential, events that would not have contemplated even six months earlier."

HARVARD BUSINESS REVIEW

"When Scenario Planning Fails" by Kalle Heikkinen, William Kerr, Mika Malin, Panu Routila and Eemil Rupponen – Harvard Business Review, April 21, 2023

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Introducing the Scenario Positioning Framework

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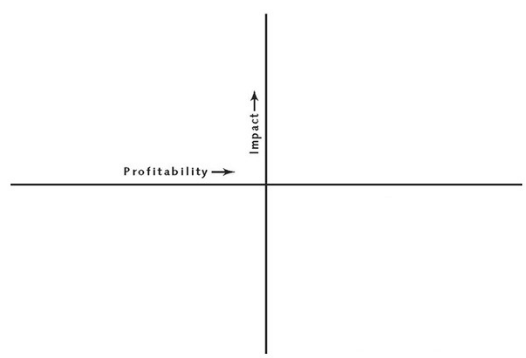
The Matrix Map



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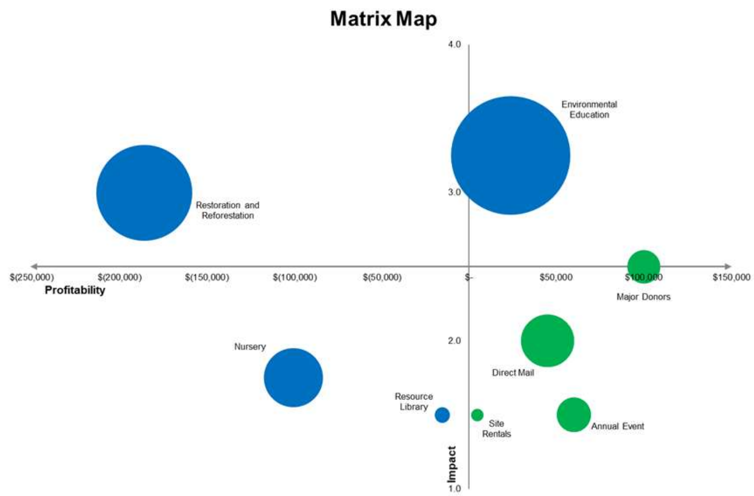
Rooting our Current Context in the Matrix Map



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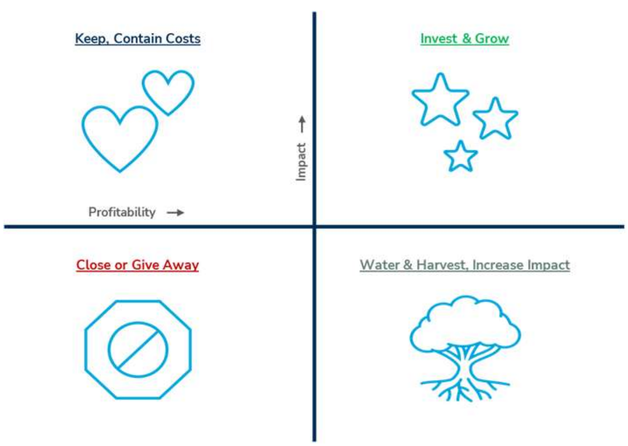
Use the Matrix Map to Make Strategic Decisions



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Defining your Impact: Intended Impact

A statement or series of statements about what the organization is trying to achieve and will hold itself accountable for within some manageable period of time. It identifies both the benefits the organization seeks to provide and the beneficiaries.

- - - *Susan Colby, Nance Stone & Paul Cartter*
Bridgespan Group

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Sample: Mission vs Impact

Mission

Improve the lives of poor children in America's most devastated communities.

Intended Impact

Over the next decade, Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) will focus on children aged 0 to 18 living in the HCZ making a successful transition to an independent, healthy adulthood, reflected in demographic and achievement profiles consistent with those in an average middle-class community.

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Leveraging Intended Impact

How do we use intended impact?

- Set a strategic direction -- make strategic choices
- Build expertise in key aspects of the organization
- Communicate the impact to funders
- Build trust with the community
- **Leverage core competencies to achieve the mission!**

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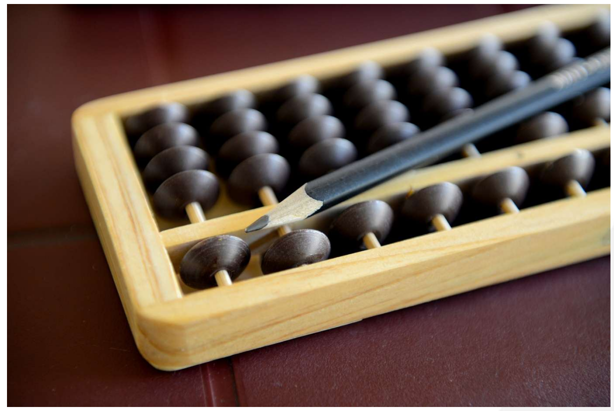
Defining your Core Competencies

"A harmonized combination of multiple resources and skills that distinguish a firm in the marketplace."

- - - C.K. Prahalad and Gary Hamel
Harvard Business Review



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Where does your organization excel?

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Photo by [Omar Ramadan](#) on [Unsplash](#)

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What processes, techniques or knowledge enables us to excel in this area?

Photo by Agefis on Unsplash

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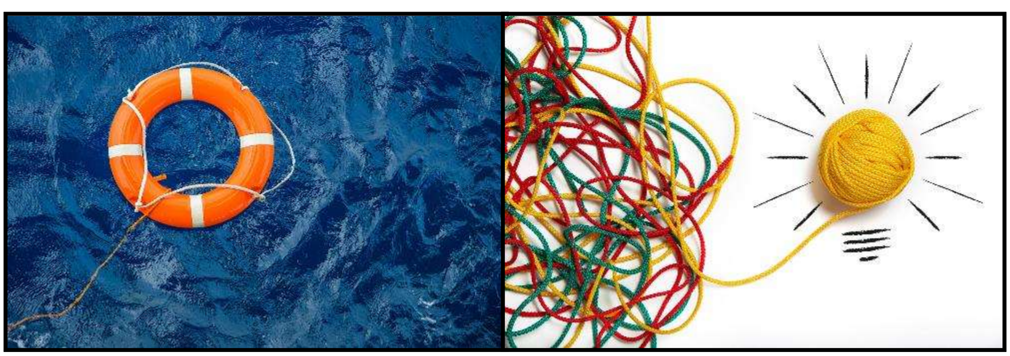
Finance: The Reserve



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Calculating the Reserve

Liquid Reserves

$$\frac{\textit{Net Assets Without Donor Restrictions} - \textit{Fixed Assets}}{\textit{Monthly Expenses}}$$

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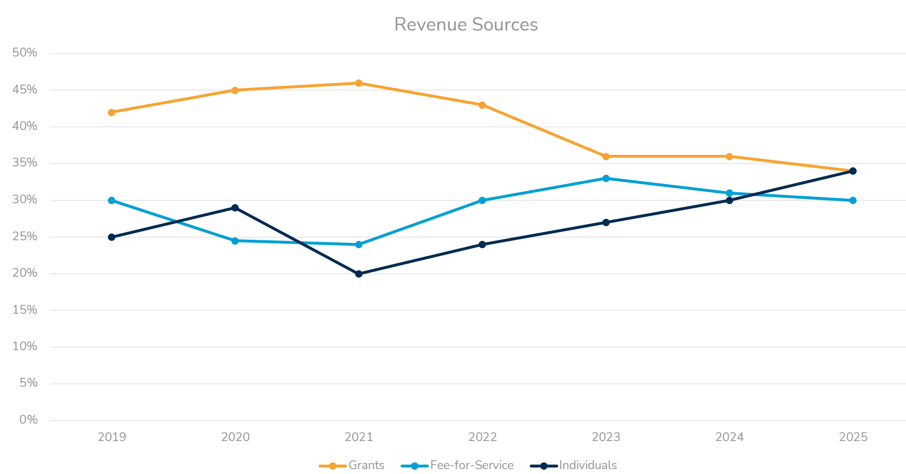
Finance: Understanding Revenue Trends



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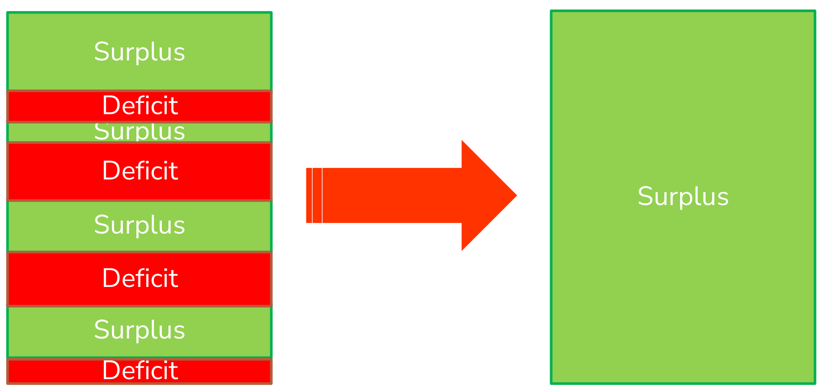
Building a Reserve



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Finance: Program Profitability

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Finance: Understanding Revenue

Revenue

Specific	Government contracts Restricted foundation grants Fee for service money
Unrestricted	Unrestricted contributions by individuals or foundations Special events

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Finance: Understanding Expenses

Expenses

Specific Expenses	Those expenses that relate directly to the program
Shared Expenses	Those expenses split between multiple programs such as occupancy and technology.
Admin Expenses	Those expenses related to time spent with the board, finance and overall organizational structure and function.

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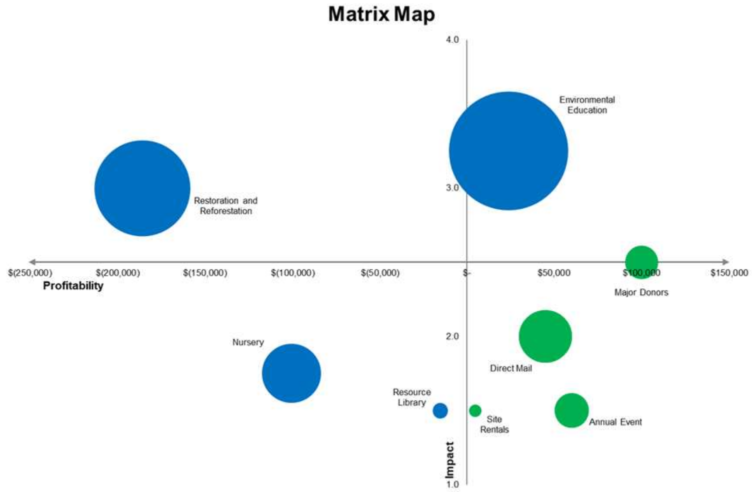
SZ1

How has your business model evolved over time to meet your beneficiaries' needs?



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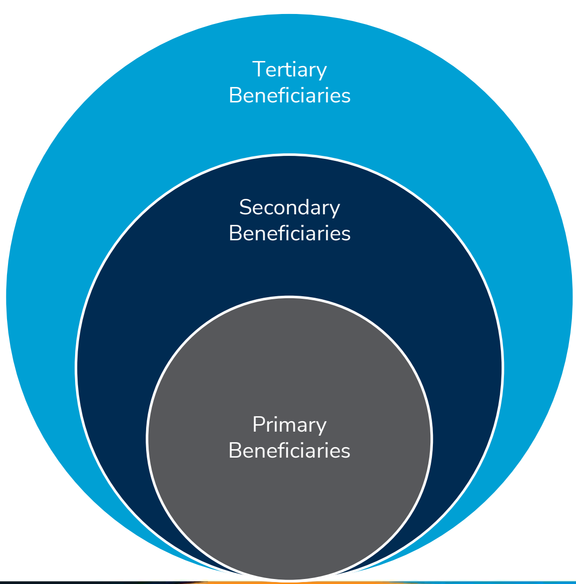
Understanding Beneficiaries



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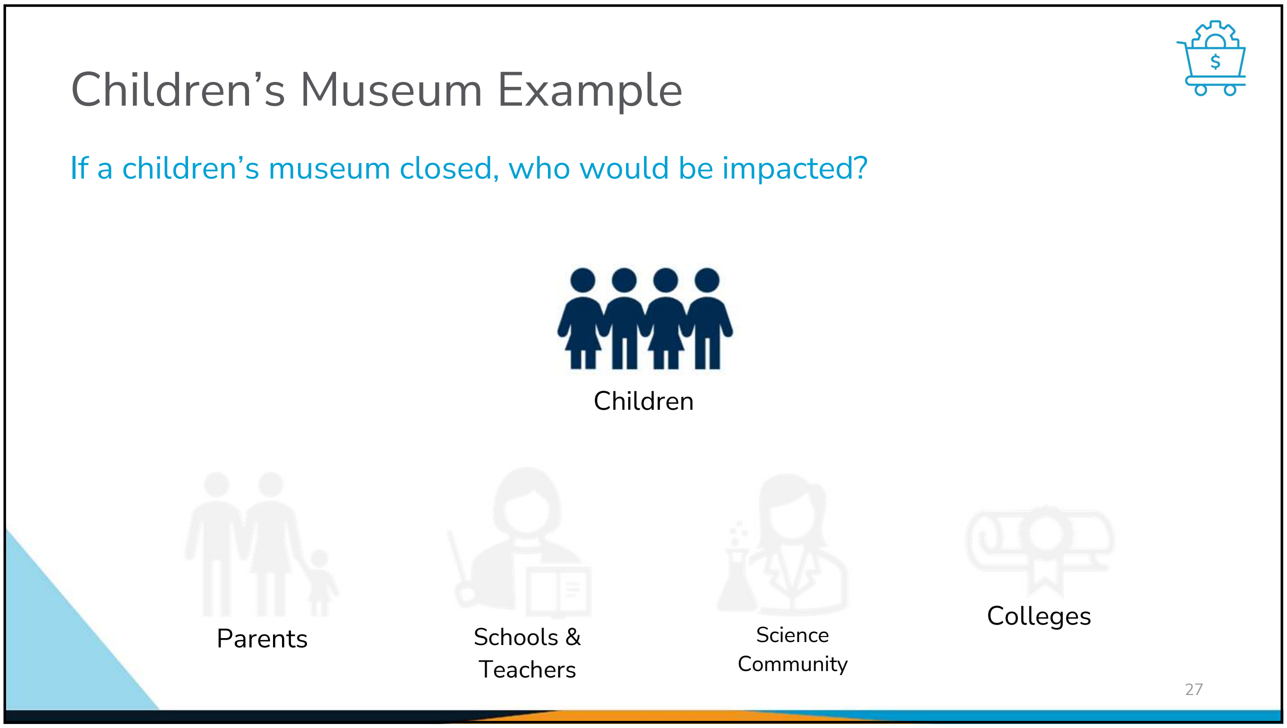
Slide 25

SZ1 Can we tie this into the matrix map and talk about how the bubbles have changed?
Steve Zimmerman, 2026-05-01T16:21:04.904


Children's Museum Example
If a children's museum closed, who would be impacted?
Children
Parents
Schools & Teachers
Science Community
Colleges
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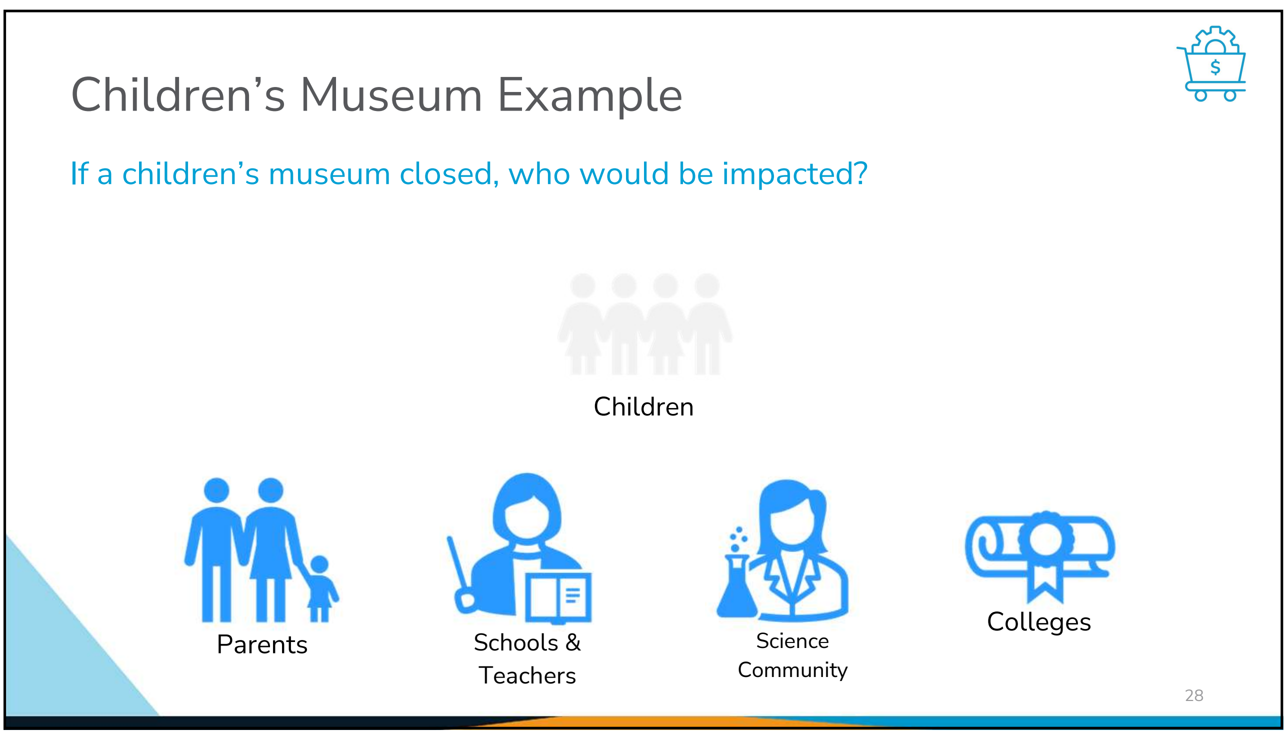
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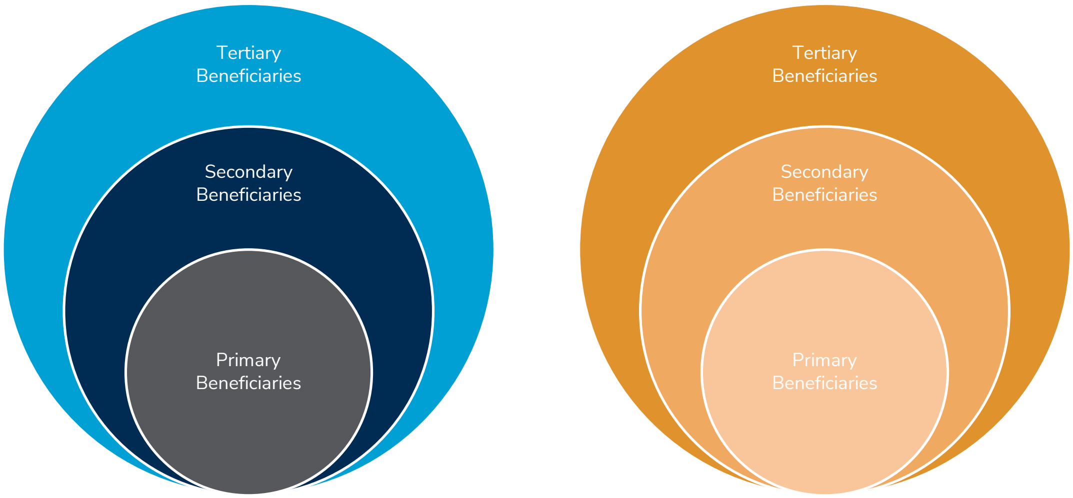
How has my beneficiaries' needs change as our external conditions change?



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Strategic Menu of Options

- Revenue Replacement
- Restructuring
- Riding it Out
- Short-Term Adjustments

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Revenue Replacement:

The Importance of Focus

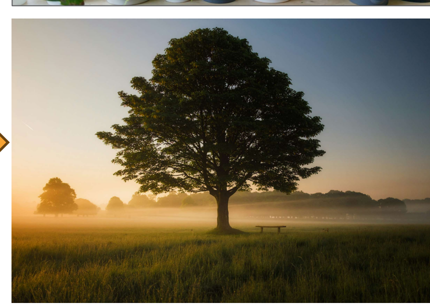
Intentionality

- Fee for Service
- Government Grants
- Foundations
- Corporations
- Individual Giving

Intentionality

Individual Giving

Corporations



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Revenue Replacement

- Investing in a primary revenue stream
- Investing in a secondary revenue stream
- Initiating a largely new revenue stream
- Changing the business model

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Restructuring

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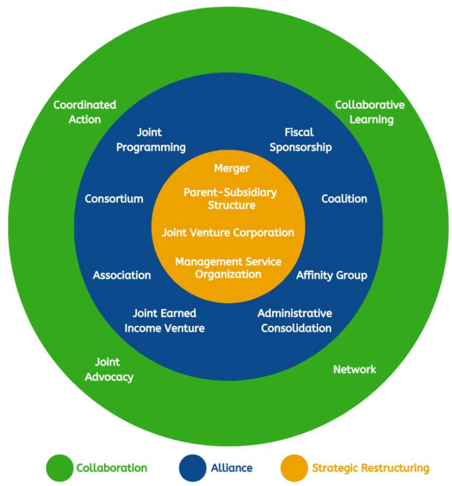
Restructuring: The Collaborative Map



Framework by La Piana Consulting

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Riding it Out

- Improving on base business transactions and compliance
- Suspension of program
- Solidifying or expanding market
- Careful monitoring for threats
- Wise accumulation and use of reserves

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Short-Term Adjustments

- Advocacy
- Facilities and Contracts
- Fixed and Variable Costs

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Strategic Menu of Options

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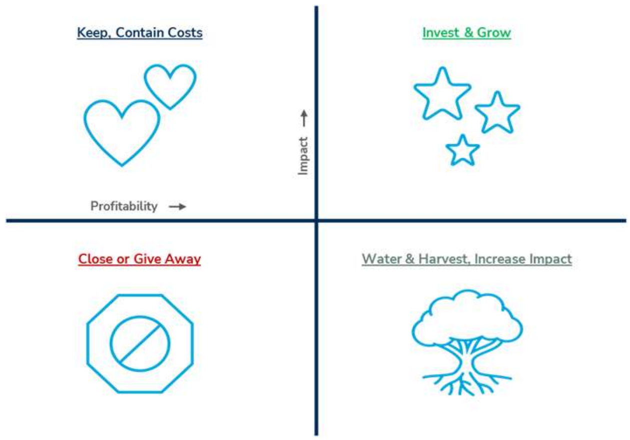
Use the Matrix Map to Make Strategic Decisions



Reflecting on the Scenario Positioning Framework

- What strategic options are you currently considering and how have you engaged your board and staff in these discussions?
- What are some initial next steps to explore this framework further within your organization?
- How might you incorporate your matrix map into this process?

Thank You!

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