



# **Just Trust Me** Exploring and Understanding the Role of Trust in Collaborative Efforts

**Riparian Restoration Conference**

March 2024


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## Associate Director

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RiversEdge West






## **Intro Activity**

What is one word that you associate with the process of trust-building?

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A scenic sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright reflection on the water's surface. A seagull stands in the shallow water in the foreground. The sky is filled with soft, golden light and scattered clouds. In the distance, there are silhouettes of landmasses and a few small boats on the water.

# Help Us Build a Resource Base

Contribute throughout the workshop



# REVITALIZING RIVERS THROUGH... TRUST

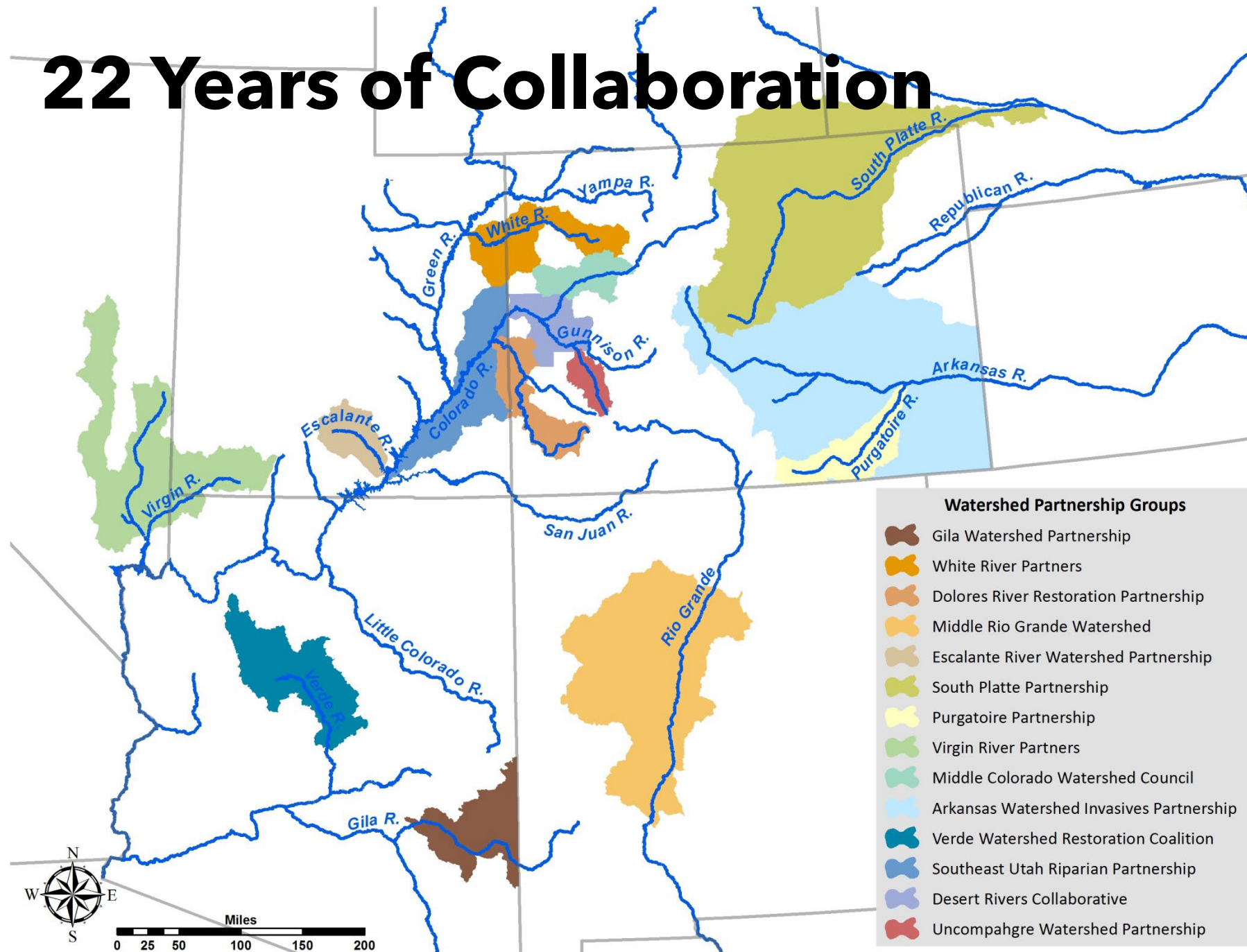


**RiversEdge West**

RESTORE + CONNECT + INNOVATE



# 22 Years of Collaboration





# What We Do



**Planning,  
fundraising  
& collaborating**



**Coordinating &  
advising invasive  
plant removal**



**Conducting &  
researching  
native plant  
restoration**



**Educating,  
monitoring & sharing  
lessons learned**



**Inspiring  
communities  
to be stewards of  
this work**





# What It Means



**Funder and donor trust**



**Land manager and landowner trust**



**Trust in and from the scientific community**



**Trust in the process and staying relevant**



**Community trust and trust in the holistic value**





# Current Partnerships



WHITE RIVER  
PARTNERSHIP



DESERT  
RIVERS  
COLLABORATIVE



DOLORES RIVER  
RESTORATION PARTNERSHIP



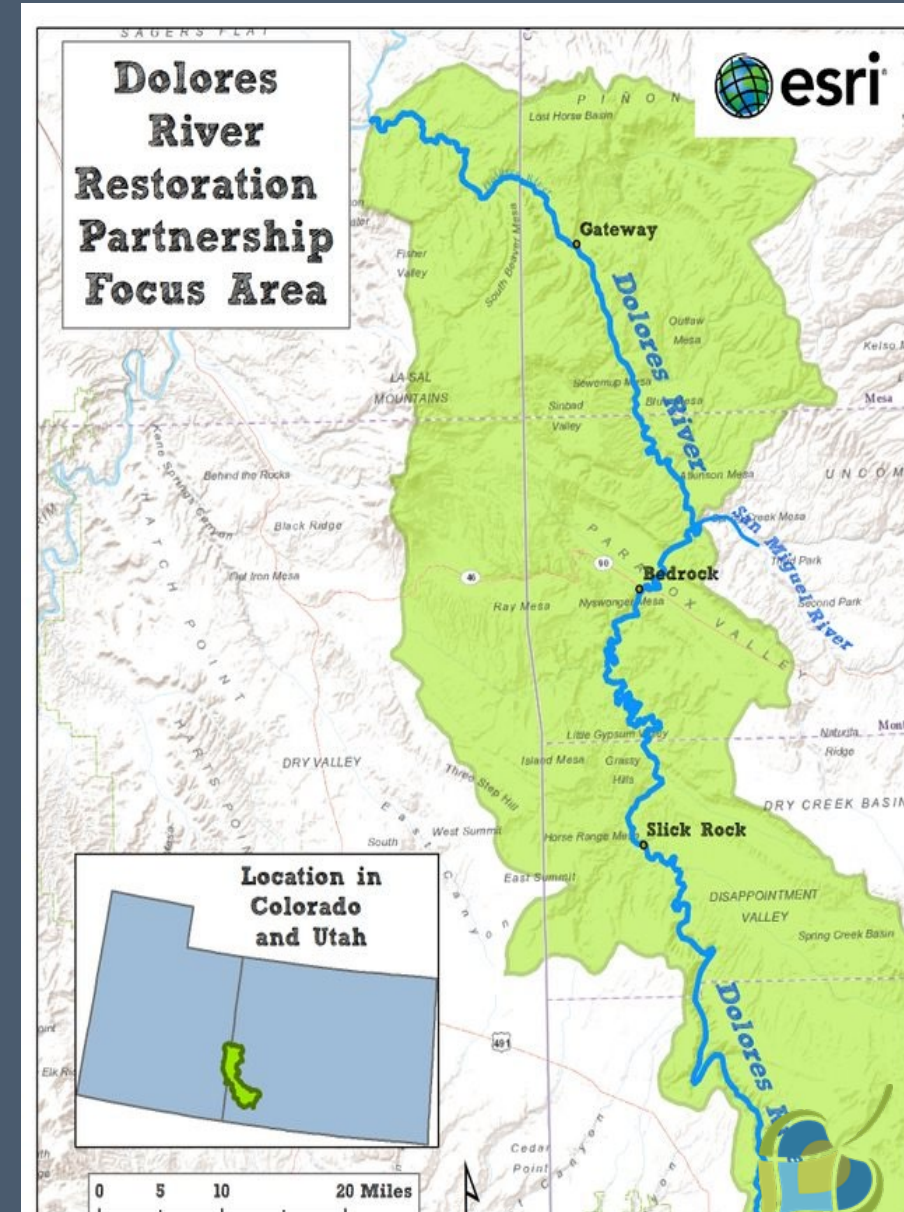


# Dolores River Restoration Partnership

Since 2009, focused on riparian restoration on 200 miles of the Dolores River

Collaborate across:

- 2 States
- 4 BLM offices
- 6 Counties
- Many small communities
- Public and private land



# ***Collaborative Pillars:***

## **Co- lead the partnership with Southwest Conservation Corps**

### **Requires trust in:**

- Personnel and withstanding turnover
- Fiscal accountability
- Joint ownership in fundraising efforts
- Quality of work
- Relationships and communication with partners and funders

### **Strategies:**

- Clear delineation of partnership responsibilities
- Weekly check in meetings with coordinators
- Monthly fundraising calls with coordinators and development staff
- Joint budgets and crew schedules
- Team approach to partnership meetings



# Partnership with the Bureau of Land Management

**As the largest land management agency, requires trust in:**

- Aligning with the various State and Field Offices
- Having **champions** on multiple levels
- Understanding current and future goals and objectives
- Having accountability and being **good stewards** of the land

## **Strategies:**

- Maintaining relationships across states from the bottom up and top down
- Commitment to staying connected to key staff and keeping them informed
- Ongoing communications on agency/partnership objectives and yearly prioritization
- Follow through on objectives, documentation and sharing of data!



# Partnership with the Bureau of Land Management

## As the longest standing funder, requires trust in:

- Aligning with the various State and Field Offices
- Having **champions** on multiple levels
- Being informed of funding opportunities, shortfalls, and changes
- Having a safe space to advocate for ongoing funding
- Accountability of agreed upon funding plans

## Strategies:

- Assistance agreements at the CO and UT State Offices
- Meeting with State level personnel yearly and Field staff on a regular basis
- Clearly communicating about funding needs and asking lots of questions
- Being vulnerable and not afraid to be the squeaky wheel
- Trust based philanthropy





## Trust Based Philanthropy

~ An approach to giving that alleviates the inherent power imbalances between funders, nonprofits, and communities

~ Six Practices:

1. Give multi-year unrestricted funding
2. Do the homework
3. Simplify and streamline paperwork
4. Be transparent and responsive
5. Solicit and act on feedback
6. Offer support beyond the check

[www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org](http://www.trustbasedphilanthropy.org)





## Memorandum of Understanding

- 3rd MOU
- Inclusive and non-binding
- Shared power structure
- Trust in the goals of the partnership
- Centerpiece for fundraising efforts

## Watershed Plans

- Historic, stakeholder driven **Dolores River Riparian Action Plan**
  - Science-driven vision
  - Goals
  - Site selection criteria
- Five- year **Transition Plan**
  - Protecting investments through monitoring and maintenance
- Three - year **Restoration Plan**
  - Reaffirming actions
  - Staying relevant





# Withstanding the Test of Time and a Changing Environment

- ✓ Don't underestimate the power of relationships and the capacity it takes to foster trust
- ✓ Remain vigilant in assessing what is working and what is not
- ✓ Stay in touch with changes in:
  - The natural world
  - The funding world
- ✓ Be courageous and ask the hard questions
- ✓ Show up and be accountable
- ✓ Be thoughtful and consistent in communication strategies
- ✓ Respect partners with where they are at
- ✓ Be mindful of the process and the right pace
- ✓ Be true to your skillsets and utilize partner skillsets appropriately
- ✓ Be transparent and practice rigorous honesty

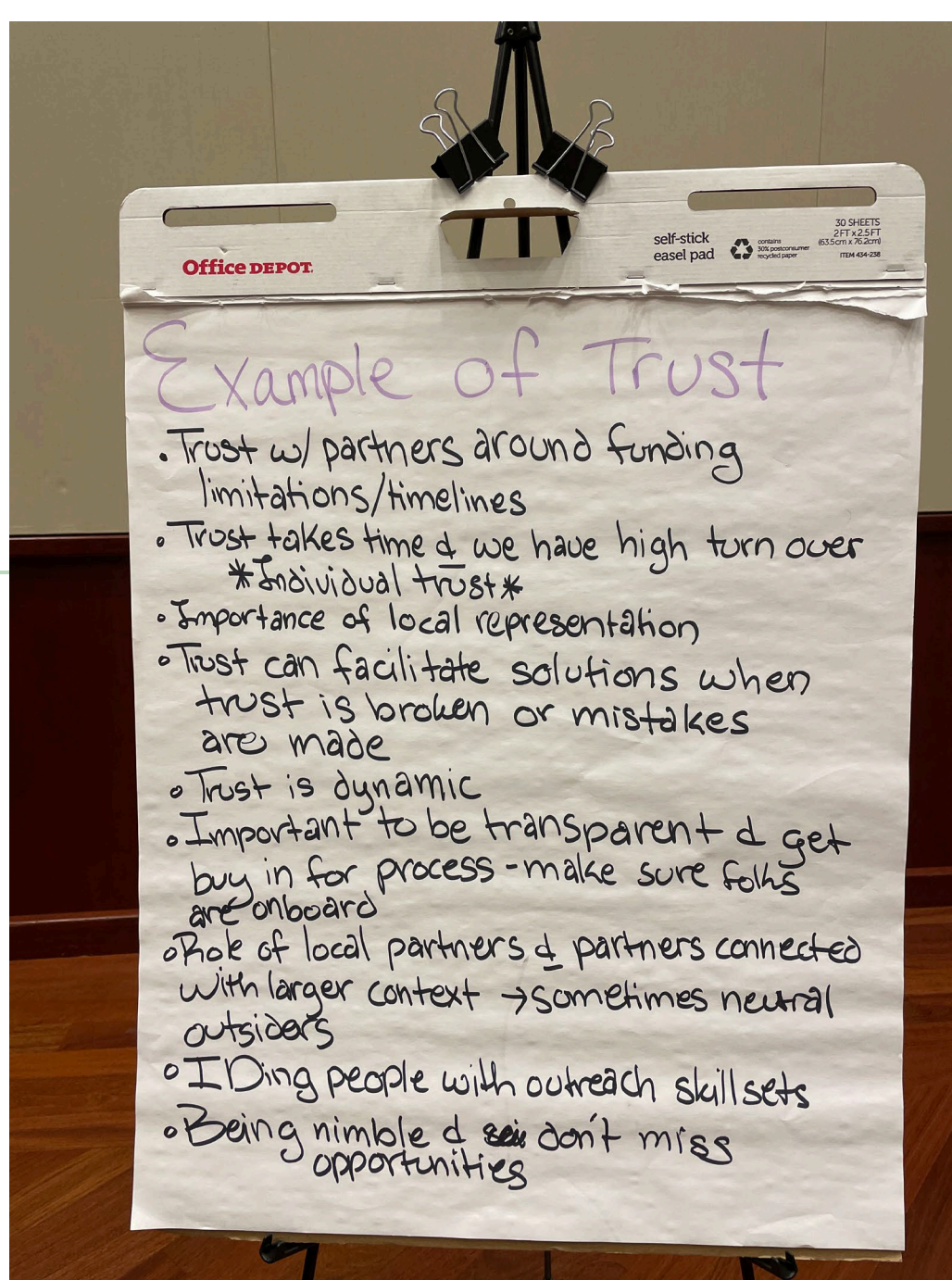




# Discussion:

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- Think of an example of trust being instrumental to the success of a collaborative effort



A serene sunset scene over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow across the sky and water. In the foreground, there are tall, thin reeds or grasses, some green and some brown. In the middle ground, a dark silhouette of a bird, possibly a heron or egret, stands on a rocky outcrop. The overall mood is peaceful and contemplative.

# Why Trust Matters

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TRUST IN THE CONTEXT  
OF COMMUNITY-BASED  
CONSERVATION AND  
STEWARDSHIP

The work is *relational*, therefore  
trust is essential.



TRUST IS ...

... a lubricant

... an enabling condition

... the bedrock of healthy  
relationships



# TRUST MATTERS FOR ...

- ... social cohesion
- ... economic efficiency
- ... emotional well-being
- ... institutional effectiveness
- ... innovation and risk-taking
- ... cooperation and collaboration



TRUST ENABLES ...

... institutions to function with legitimacy and transparency

... citizens to meaningfully engage in public processes

... decisions to be more innovative, creative, and focused on long-term outcomes

... implementation efforts to move forward with greater support

... outcomes to be more sustainable



TRUST IS BUILT UPON ...

- ... ethical actions
- ... accountability
- ... competence
- ... empathy
- ... respect
- ... reliability

TRUST IS ...

... hard to build

... easy to lose

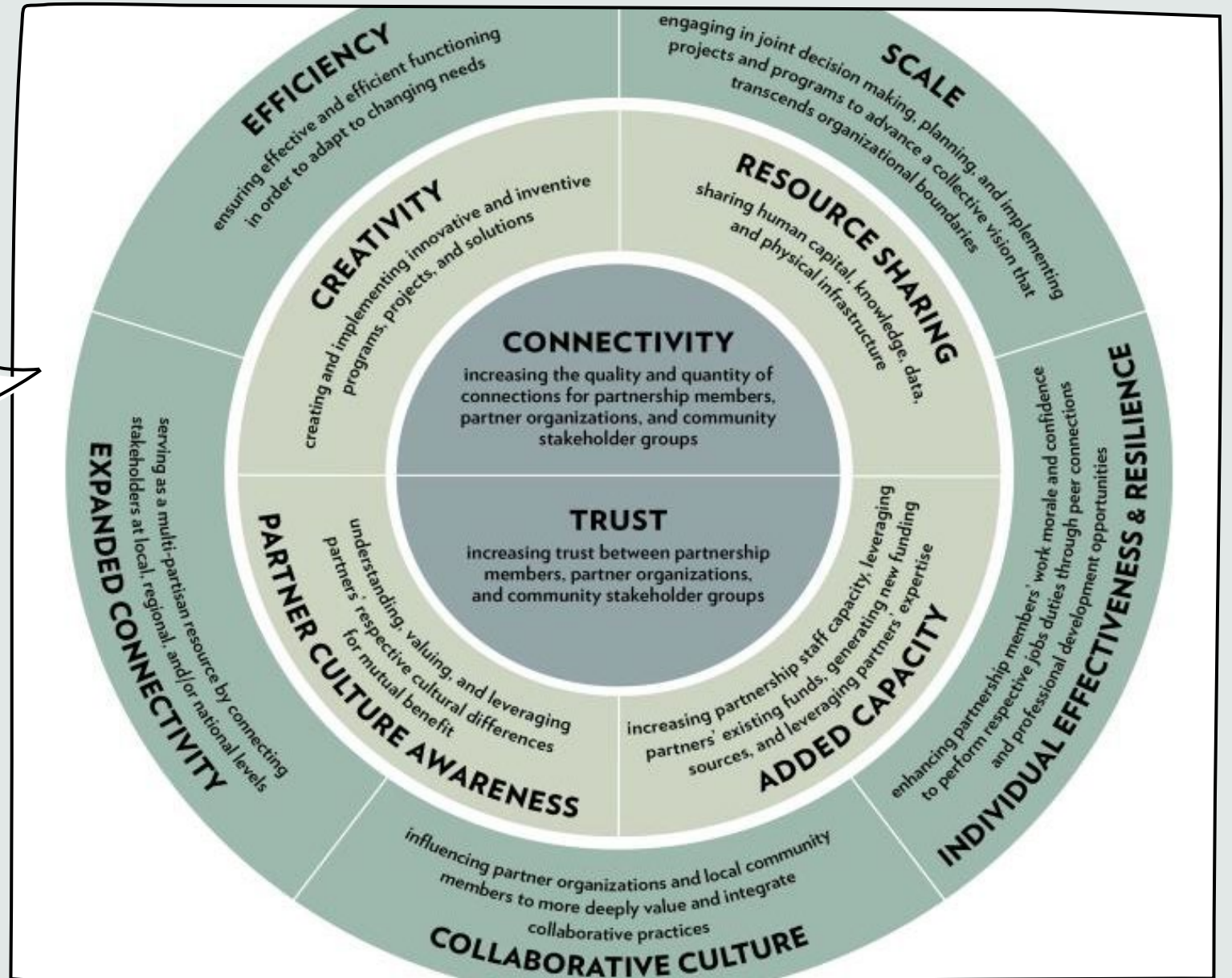


WHY TRUST MATTERS

# FOUR TYPES OF TRUST

1. Dispositional
2. Rational
3. Affinitive
4. Procedural

# PARTNERSHIP IMPACT MODEL



## Discussion:

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- What about trust is particularly important for community-based collaboration and watershed restoration efforts?
- What is most challenging to you when working to foster and build trust in the context of your work?






## What is the most Challenging in building trust?

- How to tell what the potential is
- Who needs to be at the table
- Takes a lot of time; people have layers
- People make assumptions about you depending on your org. (connect outside work)
- Turnover (develop continuity via documentation)
- Objectives may be difficult to align
- Every time you move, you have to rebuild your network (mentors needed)
- Litigation or potential for orgs to undermine each other
- Scarcity mindset
- How to "prove" it's worth it
- Remote comms vs. in person

## What about trust is important?

- Needed to get stuff done
- Sustaining momentum
- Common goal of supporting one another
- Complex reciprocity → sharing resources & skills in flexible ways
- Two-way empathy
- \* Develop shared assumptions & goals
- Allows us to be "more human" in our work



# Tools and Talk for Trust Building

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Some key tools, Peer-to-Peer  
Learning, Discussion



# Purpose and Objectives

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- (1) Learn and refresh key tools for trust in collaborative conservation settings.
- (2) Exchange knowledge with one another.



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# Communicating Trust

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How you show up and what you say.

# Showing Up

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From Amy Mickel's  
"Collaborating Consciously: The  
Four Cornerstones" (2021).

## COMPASSION

*Have empathy, be generous, and show respect*

## CHARACTER

*Act ethically, demonstrate humility, and stay positive*

## COMMITMENT

*Advance a shared vision, take action, and  
believe in the power of collaboration*

## COURAGE

*Be vocal, display curiosity, model vulnerability,  
embrace uncertainty, remain resilient, and empower others*

# Describing Trust

© Brene Brown

## *BRAVING*

# THE SEVEN ELEMENTS OF TRUST

*Boundaries* | You respect my boundaries, and when you're not clear about what's okay and not okay, you ask. You're willing to say no.

*Reliability* | You do what you say you'll do. At work, this means staying aware of your competencies and limitations so you don't over promise and are able to deliver on commitments and balance competing priorities.

*Accountability* | You own your mistakes, apologize, and make amends.

*Vault* | You don't share information or experiences that are not yours to share. I need to know that my confidences are kept, and that you're not sharing with me any information about other people that should be confidential.

*Integrity* | You choose courage over comfort. You choose what is right over what is fun, fast, or easy. And you choose to practice your values rather than simply professing them.

*Nonjudgment* | I can ask for what I need, and you can ask for what you need. We can talk about how we feel without judgment.

*Generosity* | You extend the most generous interpretation possible to the intentions, words, and actions of others.





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# Discussion:

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- What behaviors do you find the most authentic?
- When you are getting to know someone, what makes them seem trustworthy to you?



What behaviors do you find most authentic?

Gives credit to others

Admits fault

asking questions

Willing to share + contribute

Openness

Reliable warmth/openness

Vulnerability

NO CUSTOMER SERVICE VOICE

Eye Contact

Paying attention

Real Listening

Confidence w/ humility

Willing to Compromise

Interest in Others

Humor

Setting realistic expectations

Asking Questions about me

"ADMITTED? I GET THE FEELING THEY ARE VERY PRESENT AND GENUINELY INTERESTED IN CONNECTING/TALKING WITH ME."

Questions + Listening

Humility

Humor

Eye Contact  
Open Body Language

Conveying genuine interest  
Open discussion  
being vulnerable and discussing Fail

Pausing - making space for others to share

Passionate

No Customer service/robot voice or approach

Being engaged

Paying attention

Vulnerability

Self-Awareness

Ask clarifying questions





When you are getting to know someone, what makes them seem trustworthy to you?

- Engages in the conversation
- Asks questions to get to know you
- Follow-thru
- Authenticity
- Shared experiences
- Shared interests
- Curiosity
- Willingness to say "I don't know"
- Openness to change
- Accuracy
- Honesty
- Showing up when needed
- Transparency about intent
- Asking genuine questions
- Actively listens then asks questions follow up
- Good intentions
- Subjective
- Eye Contact
- Shared Experience
- THEY DO WHAT THEY SAY THEY'LL DO. THEY APPEAR OPEN AND EXHIBIT CONFIDENCE WITH HONESTY.
- Sincere Approachable Engaged
- Active Listening
- Reality recognition
- Curiosity
- Body language
- openly knowledgeable
- Ability to admit what you don't know
- Common interests and open discussion

A scenic view of a desert landscape. In the foreground, there are rocky, reddish-brown hills with sparse, dry vegetation and a single saguaro cactus. A dirt path leads down the slope. In the middle ground, a large, calm reservoir is nestled in a valley, surrounded by rocky terrain. The background features rugged, brown mountains under a cloudy sky. The overall atmosphere is one of a dry, natural environment.

# Coming Back from Broken Trust

(1) Accountability

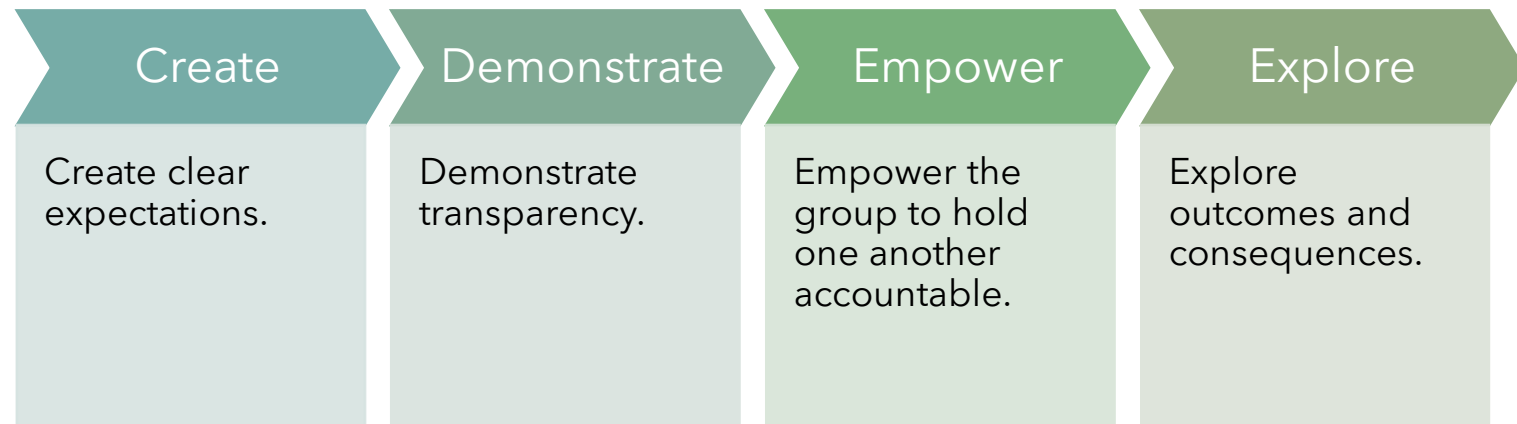
(2) Mediation



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# Accountability

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# Mediation



Objective is to come to agreement.



Move away from positions, and identify needs.



Brainstorm options for solutions that satisfy as many needs as possible.





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# Discussion:

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- What other tools might be helpful for repairing trust?
- What is a situation in which you experienced or caused trust-breaking?
- Was trust recovered? If yes, how? If no, what do you think could have helped repair the trust?



# What other tools might be helpful for repairing trust?

- Consistent effort
- Direct Conversation
- Communication
- Bar-b-que
- team training on mediation, team building, Personalities
- asking questions "why"
- Recognition + ownership genuine apology
- humility and Constructive Criticism
- Positions vs Interests
- Neutral gains approach
- apology + commitment to do better (can follow thru)
- Setting Professional Boundaries
- THERAPY
- I.D. WHAT BROKE THE TRUST. RECOGNIZE IT.
- Understand personalities
- If break trust do not wait to apologize + talk it out. Do it as soon as you can.
- Admit wrongdoing
- Anticipate breaks of trust
- anticipate conflict
- Recognition of fault
- Set ground rules
- Myers-Briggs Personality test
- Take ownership of mistakes
- Apologize
- Make space for own on one debris of conflict
- clear roles
- Agree to definitions
- changing the environment that quite communicating in
- PROTECT MANDATE RESULTS (NOT NECESSARILY FULL MEDIATION)
- refocusing on objective + taking emotions out of the immediate conversation
- Mediation before trust is broken
- Beers



What is situation in which you experienced or caused trust-breaking?

Repeated failure to show up / do work

Poor Expectation Management

jumping to conclusions

Didn't follow process

overpromising + underdelivering

acting / speaking w/out thinking

acting from assumptions

had to furlough staff

Miscommunication

personal / group attacks

- implementing a prescription conservation agreement



Was trust recovered? If yes, how? If no, what do you think could have helped repair the trust?

1 or 2 trust breaks - forgiven  
repeated breaks - No.

Identifying  
common  
needs

boundary  
reset

deep breath  
+  
clean slate

Reframe<sup>3</sup>  
adjust  
move forward

finding  
fuller  
context

flexibility  
+  
adaptability

One-  
on-  
One

Made a  
safe space  
to deal with  
the disagreement

GETTING TO THE  
CORE  
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT  
OF DIFFERENCES  
AND PROTECT  
SUCCESS

I HAVEN'T  
EXPERIENCED  
GETTING TRUST  
BACK  
STEP BACK  
BRING SOME  
OTHERS IN -  
REVISIT THE  
PROCESS AGAIN

being  
willing  
to listen

-trust was  
recovered by  
a change  
in personnel

-trust was  
recovered by  
trustworthy

Creating or  
reassessing  
boundaries





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# Creating Spaces for Trust

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- (1) Community Agreements
- (2) Facilitation

# Community Agreements

- Build together with your group; tailor to the specific group's needs
- "What do you need from every person in this group to feel safe, supported, open, productive and trusting... SO THAT we can achieve our common vision?" - National Equity Project
- Consider when to create community agreements



Drawing Change

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# Facilitation

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## Create Space

Follow through on the community agreement.


## Design

Consider power dynamics and different communication styles.

## Monitor

Pay attention to your own emotional intelligence.



A scenic sunset over a body of water. The sun is low on the horizon, creating a bright reflection on the water's surface. A seagull stands in the shallow water in the foreground. The sky is filled with soft, golden light and scattered clouds. In the distance, there are silhouettes of landmasses and a few small boats on the water.

# Help Us Build a Resource Base

Contribute throughout the workshop





# More Resources

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# COMPASSION

*Have empathy, be generous, and show respect*

## **Have Empathy**

- ✓ Create safe spaces where people are comfortable sharing
- ✓ Listen intently and show concern
- ✓ Be considerate, caring, and welcoming
- ✓ Demonstrate empathy and strive to see issues from others' perspectives

## **Be Generous**

- ✓ Spend time thinking about others and their problems
- ✓ Offer help (time and resources) to assist others with issues
- ✓ Redefine your problem to our problem (if appropriate)
- ✓ Show appreciation through frequent acts of recognition and compliments

## **Show Respect**

- ✓ Spend time learning about others' backgrounds, cultures, and histories
- ✓ Honor and value differing opinions, perspectives, needs, and expertise
- ✓ Treat everyone with respect through listening, affirmation, and kindness

- From Amy Mickel's "Collaborating Consciously: The Four Cornerstones" (2021).

# CHARACTER

*Act ethically, demonstrate humility, and stay positive*

## **Act Ethically**

- ✓ Foster a transparent environment
- ✓ Consider all perspectives equally
- ✓ Provide consistent and honest information to everyone
- ✓ Promote social justice, equity, and inclusion

## **Demonstrate Humility**

- ✓ Share credit and success willingly and openly
- ✓ Know and acknowledge your limitations (in addition to strengths)
- ✓ Be grateful for all interactions and experiences

## **Stay Positive**

- ✓ Embrace optimism and view challenges as opportunities
- ✓ Stay positive and inspire others to do the same
- ✓ Maintain a can-do attitude and say *YES*
- ✓ Have fun, be joyful, and celebrate

- From Amy Mickel's "Collaborating Consciously: The Four Cornerstones" (2021).

# COMMITMENT

*Advance a shared vision, take action, and  
believe in the power of collaboration*

## **Advance Shared Vision**

- ✓ Help identify and create consensus around a shared vision and goals
- ✓ Stay connected to a shared vision and encourage others to do the same
- ✓ Find opportunities for collaboration to advance shared goals
- ✓ Celebrate accomplishments toward shared goals

## **Take Action**

- ✓ Show up by being present (mentally and physically)
- ✓ Be ready to dig in and contribute (time, sweat, ideas, action, plans)
- ✓ Follow through on commitments and follow up with others

## **Believe in the Power of Collaboration**

- ✓ Affirm the value of collaboration through actions and words
- ✓ Reach out and invite others (especially underrepresented groups) to collaborate
- ✓ Model how to compromise for the collective good
- ✓ Commit to approaching interactions with compassion, character, and courage

- From Amy Mickel's "Collaborating Consciously: The Four Cornerstones" (2021).



# COURAGE

*Be vocal, display curiosity, model vulnerability,  
embrace uncertainty, remain resilient, and empower others*

## Be Vocal

- ✓ Openly share your knowledge, experiences, and expertise
- ✓ Clearly communicate concerns and fears
- ✓ Provide feedback, including constructive criticism when needed
- ✓ Speak up when something doesn't seem right or just

## Display Curiosity

- ✓ Facilitate dialogue by asking questions and listening (prior to providing input)
- ✓ Be open to new ideas and different ways of thinking
- ✓ Maintain a learning and growth mindset

## Model Vulnerability

- ✓ Allow others to experience your authentic self
- ✓ Accept critique, admit mistakes, and apologize (when appropriate)
- ✓ Take time for self-reflection
- ✓ Ask for help when needed

- From Amy Mickel's "Collaborating Consciously: The Four Cornerstones" (2021).

# Community Agreements

- IDP Resources: [Strategies for Implementing Community Agreements in Meetings and Groups](#)
- National Equity Project: [Developing Community Agreements](#)
- Drawing Change: [Co-creating Community Agreements in Meetings](#)

# Facilitation

- Aria Strategies LLC: [Facilitation as an Equity Strategy](#)
- ECornell: [Strategies for Facilitating Inclusion and Trust in Groups](#)
- Oxfam: [Building Trust in Diverse Teams](#)

# Accountability

- Michael Koopman (Forbes): [How to Leverage the Power of Trust for Accountable Collaboration](#)
- Kristen Hendrix (LeadershipVitae): [How to Encourage Strong Individual and Team Accountability](#)
- Laurie King (Maricopa County Regional School District): [Collaborative Accountability](#)

# Mediation

- Pon Staff (Harvard Law: Blog): [The Mediation Process and Dispute Resolution](#)
- United Nations: [Guidance for Effective Mediation](#)