Innovating to Scale Webinar Series: TAKEAWAYS

#2: CREATING AN INNOVATION CULTURE

YOUR PEOPLE & CULTURE CAN DRIVE – OR DETER – INNOVATION TO SCALE

As a leader, your job is to attract, align, and empower the right people in the right environment to scale the impact you seek. These people include your **staff** and your **board**, plus any **volunteers**, external **partners**, or others critical to accomplishing your mission. To foster innovation, your "people work" falls into two main buckets: **creating an enabling environment**, and then **supporting implementation.**

CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT FOR INNOVATION

1. Set A Clear & Compelling Vision.

Rally Around A Galvanizing North Star. Center your team on the larger problem you want to help solve so they are motivated to think big, push the limits of what is possible, and not get stuck centering the current solution.

2. Cultivate Curiosity & Learning.

Openly Discuss the Evolution. Model and foster a learning culture by discussing the organization's evolution openly, celebrating successful pivots *and* learnings from efforts that failed. Encourage "What If...?" questions.

Innovation ≠ Invention. Encourage your team to learn about other models and initiatives in your region or impact area as a way to spark ideas. *Cara leveraged a "copy + paste, then edit" approach to launch their first social enterprise: looking at other models around the country and adapting for their unique needs.*

3. Strategically Structure Staff & Board.

Create Structures to Embrace Diversity & Build Trust. Innovation requires diversity of lived experience and expertise so hire for that, celebrate it, and create the space for relationships and trust to be built (e.g., cross-functional working groups, time for new employees to develop relationships across the org, etc.).

Bring in Board Talent with Entrepreneurial Mindset. You may not have funding to hire new staff focused on innovation, but you can ensure your Board represents the expertise and mindset you need.

SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF INNOVATION

1. Enable Experimentation & Manage Risk.

Embrace Experimentation … With Guardrails. Experimentation is the best way to learn, regardless of if it succeeds or fails. Manage risk by creating clear go/no-go metrics with timelines; *for Cleanslate's experiment with a used book business, it set a timeline to create a certain number of jobs and to break even.*

2. Evolve Team To Meet Demands.

Find Strategic Partners To Accelerate The Learning Journey. When entering new territory, be humble enough to know where your current expertise and network ends – and where bringing in a strategic partner provides a critical complement and learning opportunity. You can evolve your capabilities over time: *the Hill Center used a pro-bono tech agency, then hired a consultant, before investing in a full-time in-house technology officer .*

When Bringing In Outside Talent, Keep Your Mission Central. For many organizations, it's not just what you do, but also *how* you do it. When bringing new subject matter experts into the organization, ensure they are able to honor and respect the community and culture around your mission.

3. Bring Everyone Along.

Change Moves At The Velocity Of Trust. Think early and often about ways to bring in voices across departments and organizational layers, and to create a structure for information to flow back through to staff and Board. *As Maria said, "Sometimes you have to move slow to go fast. Change moves at the velocity of trust."*