Designing Collaborations for Courageous Change

Session 1 | April 22

Section 1

INTRODUCTION

Welcome!

Thank you for joining us.

Talking Today

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Hi! We're Reboot.
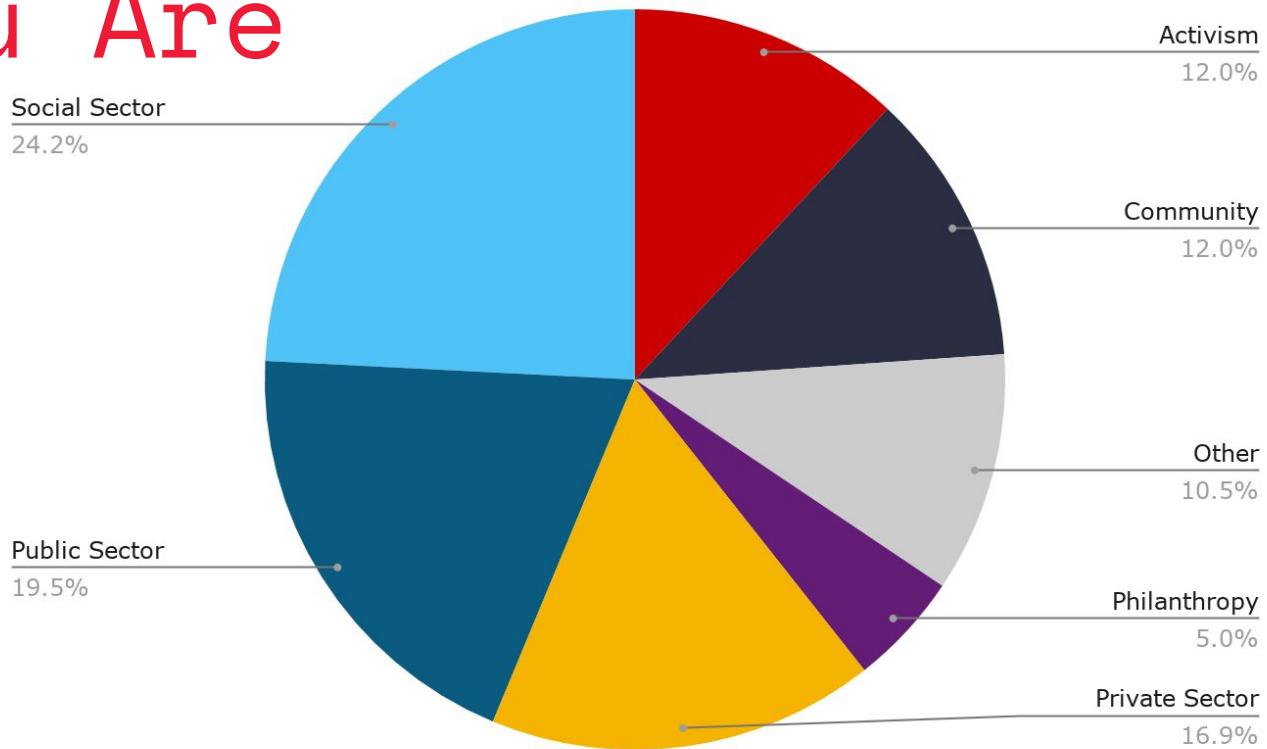
Who We Are: We were founded to **tackle structural inequity and injustice.** We work primarily work in the global development, good governance, and civic and media innovation spaces.

How We Work: We advance our mission in over 40 countries in collaboration with partners — social movements, community groups, civil society, media, companies, governments, and international agencies - **helping them drive transformative collaborations for courageous change.**

Our Perspective: Our thinking and methods are informed by our backgrounds as ethnographers, organizers, facilitators, and designers.

Who You Are

Social Sector
24.2%

Activism
12.0%

Community
12.0%

Other
10.5%

Philanthropy
5.0%

Private Sector
16.9%

Public Sector
19.5%

Systems change requires all of us.

Role, as commonly understood	Artists	Activists	Researchers	Grassroots Groups	Civil Society	Companies	Governments	Journalists
	imagine futures that honours each person's dignity	**protest** unjust systems, practices, institutions	**assess** different possible paths to a better future.	**care for** communities to ensure critical needs are met.	**builds** movements that holds us accountable to the greater good	**produce** goods and services that people need to meet their needs	**create** policies and **deliver** services to serve their people	**monitors** institutions and society for violations of our social contract

...but these archetypal roles are somewhat idealistic, and even increasingly naive.

But to change systems, we must change ourselves.

	Artists	Activists	Researchers	Grassroots Groups	Civil Society	Companies	Governments	Journalists
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... and as it must evolve.	and **advocate** for these new realities. .	and **help define paths** to dismantling them.	and **shape discourse & policy** towards them.	and **push for** needs being sustainably met.	and **embeds** them within institutions & ecosystems.	and do so via **ethical, sustainable practices.**	and **protect against** corrupting interests.	and **combats narratives** that fuel fear, divisiveness, and hate.

Why We're Here

The Need: Tackling systemic challenges require systemic approaches. We need each other's superpowers and skills AND we also others to hold us to account.

The Challenge: Radical collaboration is hard. There's mistrust, there's fear, there's cultural differences, and there's good ol' logistics.

Photo by Callum Shaw on Unsplash

"But it's so hard…"

- How do we **bring the right actors** to the table?

- How do we **overcome mistrust**, **fear, shame, inertia?**

- How do we **agree on a common vision** when we all come from different backgrounds?

- How do we move past talk (so! much! talk!) and **into action**?

- How to we sustain **momentum for the long haul**?

And yet it's essential.

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We need ALL these superpowers	**Radical Imaginations**	**Moral Clarity & Courage**	**Intellectual Rigour**	**Generosity, Agility, Creativity**	**Power to Compel Action**	**Production Distribution Capacity**	**Resources, Scale & Durability**	**Ability to Shape Public Agendas**

Utopian? Hardly.

Systems and structures that enable and sustain injustice, inequality, and oppression were intentionally designed.

Futures that honour and protect justice, equality, and liberation can also be designed. But it requires all of us.

We must overcome personal discomfort & historical barriers to **build new muscles & platforms for radical collaboration** for responding now & reimagining our future.

Our 3-Part Series

Session 1: Why & Who
Designing Collaborations for Urgent, Courageous Change

How to:
- Create a compelling rallying cry
- Bring together unlikely partners
- Overcome mistrust & establish a strong foundation for success

Session 2: How, Pt 1.
Aligning on Priorities When Everything is Important

How to:
- Navigate messy dynamics to align on a common agenda
- Manage differing interests and politics
- Assess trade-offs and take decisions together

Session 3: How, Pt 2.
Steering Diverse Partners Toward Cohesive Action

How to:
- Drive a diverse group towards action
- Navigate tensions and disagreements
- Troubleshoot inevitable tensions and challenges that arise

How We'll Work

Integrated Series

This is a 3 part series and each session builds on, and refers to, the last.

Standalone Sessions

Each session can also stand alone. They include methods & tools that you can use in your work.

Continued Conversations

At the end of each session we'll answer questions, but we encourage you to continue the conversation online through social media. Don't be shy about reaching out.

Group Expectations

Be:

Present

Constructive
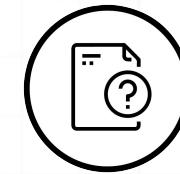
Online Etiquette:

Mics will be muted!

See anything inappropriate? Please chat Alyssa.

Collaborative:

Ask a question & participate in the polls.

Engage in the chat with your peers.

LAYING A STRONG FOUNDATION

THE VIEW FROM HERE

Collaboration ain't easy.

- **Mistrust** stemming from historically antagonistic relationships, or stereotypes about what roles we should play.
- **Shame** that we're not fulfilling the function that we are supposed to.
- **Fear** that we will get found out, and that others will exploit our vulnerabilities.
- **Inertia feels safer** than figuring out how to address the above AND doing so across different cultures, ideologies, motivations, timelines, appetites for risk, success metrics, etc, etc, etc.

"Most social innovations don't stem from solving technical challenges — they result from **solving relational challenges**."

- Adam Kahane

(paraphrased, but it's very smart and he's very kind so we hope it's ok)

Part I:

The Work Before the Work

Where you start matters.

- It requires deep thinking and planning about **what** you want to tackle, and **who** can help you do it

- We can lay the groundwork in advance, to:
  - Lean in and **tackle the messy, human dynamics**
  - Give people **a reason to show up**

Start with the problem **they experience**

NOT with the solution you want to build. Help future partners see themselves in your prompt.

Frame your rallying cry

←------------ **Starting Point Spectrum** ------------→

Problem Space

Solution Space

Framing our rallying cry

←------------ **Starting Point Spectrum** ------------→

Problem Space   **Solution Space**

We have identified the problem that we want to solve but are not sure how to address it together.

Don't start in solution space.

<------------- **Starting Point Spectrum** ------------>

Problem Space | **Solution Space**

We have already identified a solution to our problem and need to co-create or adapt it.

Recognize your biases

We all have biases, from our experiences, networks, influences.

They aren't necessarily bad, but we need to name them and how they might prevent us from seeing other ideas.

Present your ideas as hunches to be tested.

And don't be too precious about them.

- There may be valid, legitimate reasons why your idea is not possible.

- Listen to these reasons and incorporate them into your thinking.

DON'T:
Put forward a fixed idea

In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, people are struggling. Those that were already vulnerable are even more so.

Public service providers (e.g. government) **do not have sufficient resources** to address the volume of immediate needs caused by this shock.

We need to formally connect city services to community mutual aid groups

(Solution is already defined. I'm not sure I agree or how I can contribute.)

DO:
Present a hunch & extend an invitation

[Same intro]

Public service providers (e.g. government) **are struggling** to address the volume of immediate needs. Hyperlocal community mutual aid groups filling the gaps—delivering groceries, filling prescriptions, running essential errands—to help their vulnerable neighbors.

There is an opportunity to build on these efforts by connecting city services with these emerging community networks, to create more nimble, robust, and resilient social safety nets in vulnerable and underserved communities.

[Presents an attractive vision, and invitation to explore together. My interest is piqued.]

Framing our rallying cry

←------------ Starting Point Spectrum ----------→

Problem Space   **Solution Space**

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In the midst of Covid-19, people are struggling. Those that were already vulnerable—the elderly, those with pre-existing health conditions, and those living below the poverty line—are even more so. **Public service-providers (e.g. government, non-profits) do not have sufficient capacity and resources to meet the needs communities face.**

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In the midst of Covid-19, people are struggling. Those that were already vulnerable—the elderly, those with pre-existing health conditions, and those living below the poverty line--are even more so. Public service-providers (e.g. government, non-profits) do not have sufficient capacity and resources to meet the needs communities face.

We have already identified a solution to our problem and **need to co-create or adapt it.**

Amidst Covid 19, governments are struggling to respond to mounting, and immediate public needs. Community mutual aid groups are stepping in to fill the gaps and help their at-risk neighbors meet their needs. We need develop a central dashboard to help public service providers and community volunteers coordinate and help people in need.

Give people something they can see themselves in.

The solutions possible partners put forward contain **important clues that signal what matters to them**. It may:

1. Tackle an aspect of the problem that feels **most urgent or important** to them

2. Include an **element or feature** that is critical to success

3. Address a **personal need / incentive** that may drive their engagement

Hear what they say...

Actor	Idea	Success criteria
Medical first responder	"Fast"	
Activist/organizer	"Jump through loopholes"	
Non-profit staff	"Most vulnerable first"	
City Council Member	"Survival & recovery"	

To define success criteria

Actor	Idea	Success criteria
Medical first responder	"Fast"	Urgently
Activist/organizer	"Jump through loopholes"	Creatively
Non-profit staff	"Most vulnerable first"	Centering equity & justice
City Council Member	"Survival & recovery"	Now & for the future

What To Avoid

COVID-19 has created new challenges for vulnerable people. [Does not specify a problem, or who it impacts. Seems like every other thing that comes across my desk.]

Governments are not doing enough to help them. [Identifies a very specific challenge that alienates critical potential partners. Finger pointing is a no no..]

We must set up mobile, first-responder health units in low-income neighborhoods to make sure poor people have access to testing and emergency health care. [Contains the solution, with logic of how we got here. Gives people a reason to list all the reasons "why not".]

We must ensure all residents, even those undocumented, have access to healthcare as a human right. [Goes beyond scope of what collaborators can address. Prompts overwhelm and further exhaustion.]

(Most calls to action now have some elements of these. They don't invite collaboration.)

Work in partners' criteria

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A Better Option

COVID-19 has exacerbated many existing social challenges. Those that were already vulnerable—the elderly, those with pre-existing health conditions, low-income individuals and families—are even more so.

Public service-providers are struggling to respond to their immediate needs. They lack the resources and capacities to do so.

There is an urgent need to develop creative new ways of providing enhanced social support to these groups. We must recognize the vast inequities laid bare by COVID-19, and ensure our efforts center equity and justice.

We have an opportunity to do the right thing now—and to build the foundation for a more resilient future.

Give partners a compelling reason to show up.

- **Be as precise as you can** about your interests and concerns. Avoid jargon like "innovation", "empowerment", "revolutionize".

- **Avoid pointing fingers.** Blame is the fastest way to turn potential partners into likely adversaries.

- **Craft an invitation that sparks imagination - think "what if?" not "what about...".** Invite partners to think with you. Don't state the solution - it gives them an excuse to say "why not" or "not for me".

- **Ask partners to think big... within their sphere of influence.** People want to first work on what they can, then help you recruit bigger allies once you've demonstrated your value.

Part II:

Bringing People Together

Engage the right humans.

- Start with people that share the **same worldview, values, and motivations.** This is priceless and critical at the outset.
- **Don't reach for status:** the biggest name organizations, the highest titles, the most prominent thinkers. (Those can often be more trouble!)
- **Start with trusted relationships,** develop a core, and work "up and out".
- Appeal to **personal incentives.**

The "who" matters.

Think (carefully) about the who.

Consider who is **well-suited to participate, based on objectives.**

Include **diverse and underrepresented** perspectives.

Take a more expansive view of **"expertise".**

Bringing the right people together

Collaborations should include a variety of actors, based on objectives. Some profiles to consider:

- Experts
- Decision-makers
- Allies (funders, media, academia)

Diverse perspectives is key

Pay attention to often overlooked profiles and perspectives that are critical to creating, executing, sustaining, and adapting collaborative efforts.

Take an **expansive view of "expertise".**

Technical Experts: *Less is more*

Living Experts: *More than you think, but maybe differently*

Decision Makers: *Early, avoid weeds*

Implementers: *Far more than you think—always*

Allies: *Early, at strategic points*

Issue Experts

Helps us: Understand social, cultural, and/or political dimensions of an problem (or the "problem ecosystem")

Key questions:

- What are the manifestations of the problem?
- How did they get to be this way? What are the root causes?

Photo by Hush Naidoo on Unsplash

Living Experts

Helps us: Understand the lived experience of a problem or context

Key questions:

- How does this issue impact people in their daily lives? What do they feel and need?
- What barriers and opportunities exist in different approaches (that are not apparent to an outside actor)?

Photo by Mark Hang Fung So on Unsplash

Engage living experts in ways that work for them.

- **Meet them where they are:** One-on-one conversations might be better than group settings; consider carefully the norms of the spaces you're asking them to enter.

- **Identify trusted intermediaries** that have longstanding relationships and can communicate in a way that is comfortable.

- **Reject the myth of "all citizen participation is good":** Be mindful of what you are asking from them, and don't ask them to do your job for you. Be sensitive about how much time / space / emotional labour you ask for.

Implementers

Helps us: Understand key institutional processes & constraints that need to be considered for successful implementation

Key questions:

- What do the current approaches to this problem look like?
- What needs to change in order to deliver this effectively?
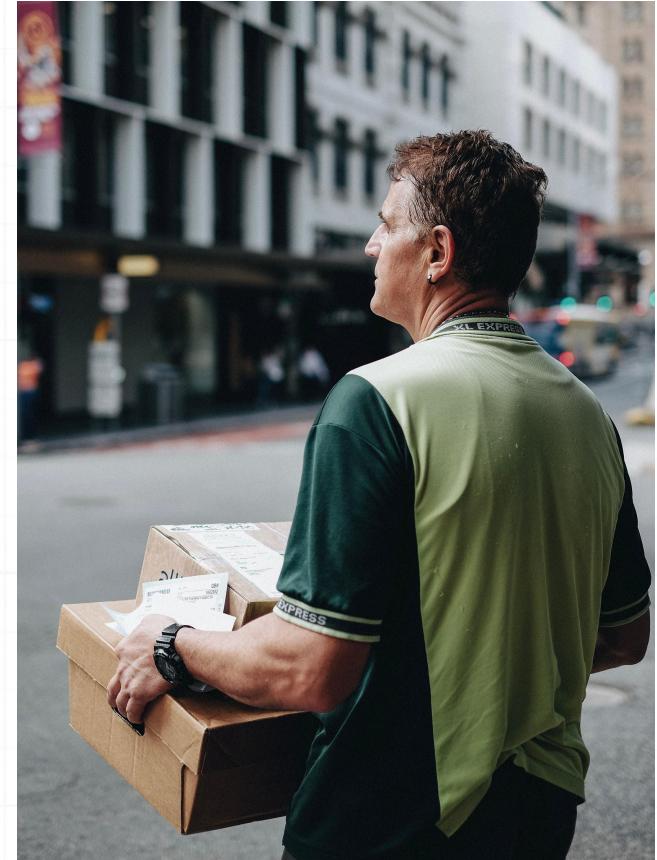
Photo by Handy Wicaksono on Unsplash

Bringing the right people together.

- **Curate the right humans and profiles.** Identify who is well suited to participate, based on temperament not titles.

- **Include diverse and underrepresented perspectives.** Focus on the practical, lived expertise you need.

- **Consider the human first.** How to appeal to their interests and make it easy for them to participate.
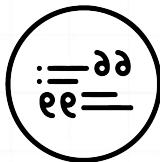
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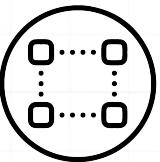
Launching Your Collaboration
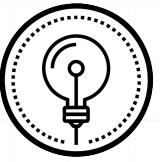
It's a journey. Plan the arc.

Develop social cohesion before tackling the technical challenge. Build a community of humans with shared values, not a group of affiliated organizations. This is essential for follow-through, particularly something is new or uncomfortable.

Plan out for multiple touchpoints. Spread the process out, consider pacing carefully (and adjust), and embrace an ambiguous end point.

Grow the group's leadership over time. Start from a coalition approach, and ensure everyone has a leadership role at some point.

"Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past & imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world & the next.

We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice & hatred, our avarice, our data banks & dead ideas.
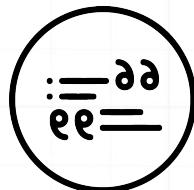
Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, **ready to imagine another world.**

And ready to fight for it."
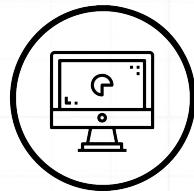
— Arundhati Roy
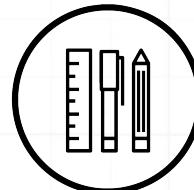
SESSION 1 RECAP

<u>C</u>reate a compelling rallying cry (**what** you want to achieve and **why**)

Bring together the right actors (**who** can help with this)—even those that may seem like unlikely or difficult partners

Overcome mistrust and establish a strong foundation for success.

Questions? Ideas? Get in touch.

We are creating new spaces
for radical collaboration,
and open to ideas & partners.

urgentnow@reboot.org

April 29, 12PM EDT
Session 2: The HOW, Part 1 – Focusing Our Efforts

May 06, 12PM EDT
Session 3: The HOW, Part 2 – Facilitating and Adapting

REMINDER! Join us for the next two sessions

Thank you!

Learn more about the series at bit.ly/rebootmasterclass

Join the conversation online with the hashtag #RadicalCollab and tag @theReboot