SOVA

Implementation Science & Continuous Improvement

Louisiana Board of Regents
2026 Meauxmentum Summit

Our Time Together

- Hello & Welcome!
- Meet Sova; Meet Sarah
- Implementation Science
- Continuous Improvement Framework
- Driver Diagram Development
- Moving Plan to Action
- A Few Considerations
- Let's Connect!

At Sova, we partner with higher education systems and institutions, associations, and philanthropies to achieve large-scale change through careful attention to actionable strategy and practical implementation support.

We use problem solving as a pathway toward equitable outcomes and strengthened social and economic mobility for all.

Who here is....

→ a big idea thinker?

→ a details-oriented, implementation thinker?

→ both?

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Implementation Science

WONDERY
THE BIG FLOP

7,000,000 POINTS
PEPSI, WHERE'S MY JET?

Federal Student Aid
A better FAFSA® process means a better future for everyone.
AWARD YEAR 2024-2025
Full implementation is right around the corner.

Where have you seen examples of big ideas successfully implemented?

Implementation Science

Implementation science is the scientific study of methods and strategies that facilitate the uptake of evidence-based practice and research into regular use by practitioners and policymakers.

The Know-Do Gap

The field of implementation science seeks to systematically close the gap between what we *know* and what we *do* by identifying and addressing the barriers that slow or halt the adoption of proven interventions and evidence-based practices.

Frameworks Driving Implementation Research

- **Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR)**
  - Examines five domains that influence implementation
    - intervention characteristics,
    - outer setting
    - inner setting
    - individual characteristics
    - implementation process.

- **Promoting Action on Research Implementation in Health Services (PARIHS)**
  - Suggests successful implementation depends on:
    - evidence quality
    - context receptivity
    - facilitation

- **RE-AIM Framework**
  - Evaluates interventions based on:
    - Reach
    - Effectiveness
    - Adoption
    - Implementation
    - Maintenance

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Continuous Improvement Framework

Dynamic Sustainability

Emphasizes ongoing adaptation and improvement rather than maintaining rigid fidelity to original interventions.

1. **Data-Driven Decision Making**
2. **Adaptability**
3. **Sustainability Focus**
4. **Learning Systems:** *knowledge generation is embedded in daily practice*

The healthcare industry - a learning system - paved the path for the convergence of implementation science and continuous improvement and the subsequent adoption in higher education.

Strategic Need

Leaders across the higher education landscape are constantly identifying key strategic needs to meet a host of demands: finance, service provision, mission alignment, emerging legislation, etc.

Implementation Dilemma

The ability to move from strategy to implementation remains challenging across higher education - from strategic priorities to basic programming.

The implementation dilemma is costing higher education time, money, resources, capacity, etc. and, ultimately, outcomes.

Continuous Improvement Framework

Because change and implementation needs to happen at the organizational level but is led by those across the organization with varying skill sets and priorities, progress is often stymied.

Employing continuous improvement as a framework provides structure for identifying key goals, barriers to success, and clear and concise plans for making progress within a timeline that prioritizes intended outcomes.

Continuous Improvement Framework

Continuous improvement is the ongoing process of analyzing performance, identifying opportunities, and making incremental and breakthrough changes to processes, products, and personnel.

By analyzing and fine-tuning processes, organizations can create efficiencies, build capacity, meet goals, and improve decision-making.

Continuous Improvement Benefits

Makes overwhelming and complicated scenarios more manageable.

Forces acknowledgement of key challenges thwarting success

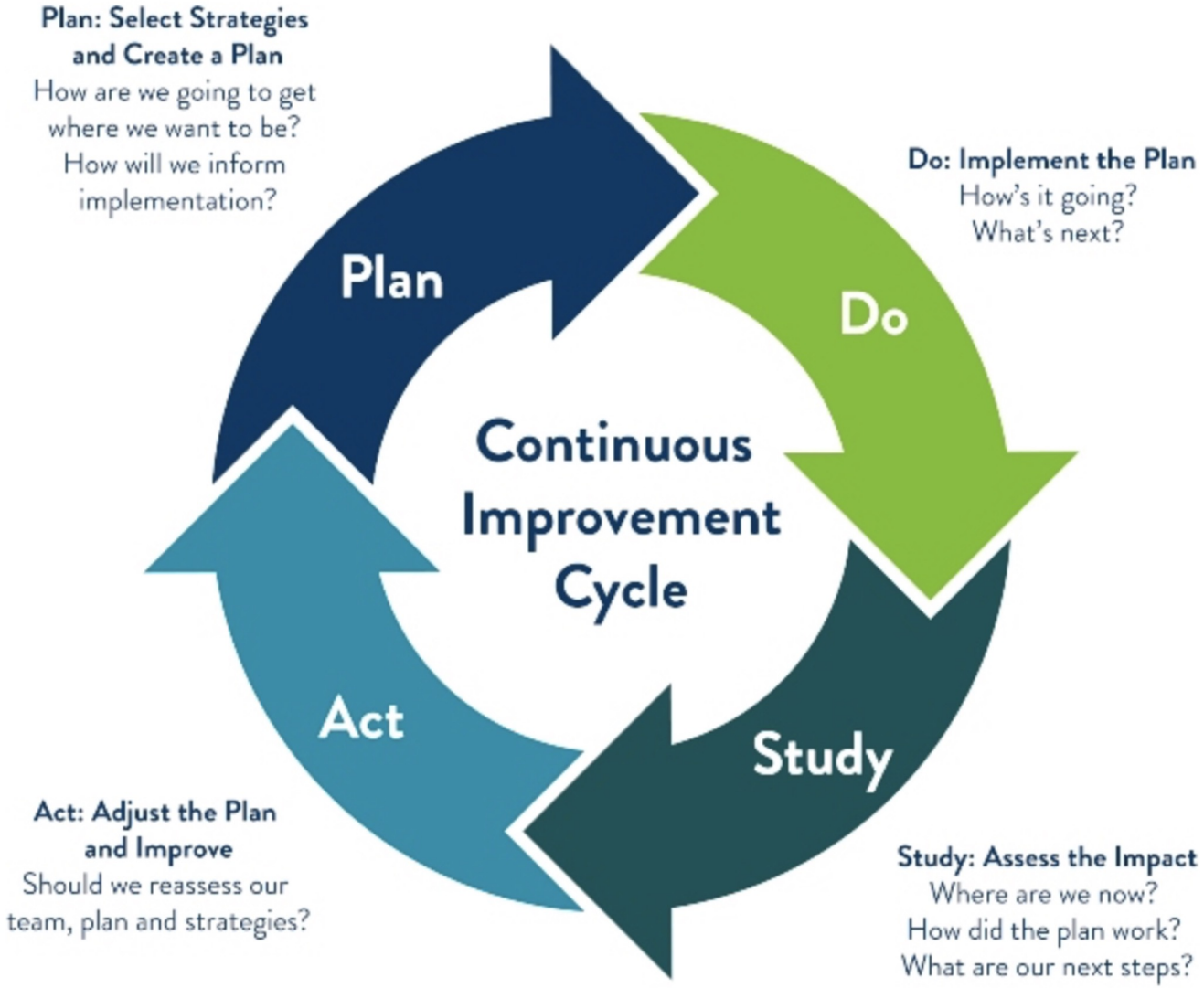
Allows competing priorities to be managed with focus on organizational needs & health

Creates structures for progress and accountability

Provides intentional space for reflection and mid-course changes to drive innovation

Learn Fast, Fail Fast, Improve Quickly

Elements of Continuous Improvement Cycles


Plan: Select Strategies and Create a Plan
How are we going to get where we want to be? How will we inform implementation?
Plan
Do: Implement the Plan
How's it going? What's next?
Do
Continuous Improvement Cycle
Act
Act: Adjust the Plan and Improve
Should we reassess our team, plan and strategies?
Study
Study: Assess the Impact
Where are we now? How did the plan work? What are our next steps?

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Driver Diagram Development

Driver Diagram Creation

Often, implementation approaches become so focused on tactics that the strategic goals of the project are lost and key metrics are not considered.

Through development of a driver diagram - a foundational component of continuous improvement - leaders:

- **state strategic goals**
- **identify intended outcomes**
- **select metrics to measure progress and success**
- **examine key barriers to progress**
- **determine tactical projects.**

This provides useful guardrails in collaborative work where many competing priorities exist and decision-making can become challenging.

What is a big challenge you are hoping to solve?

Strategic
Priority

How does finding a solution for your challenge align with an institutional strategic priority?

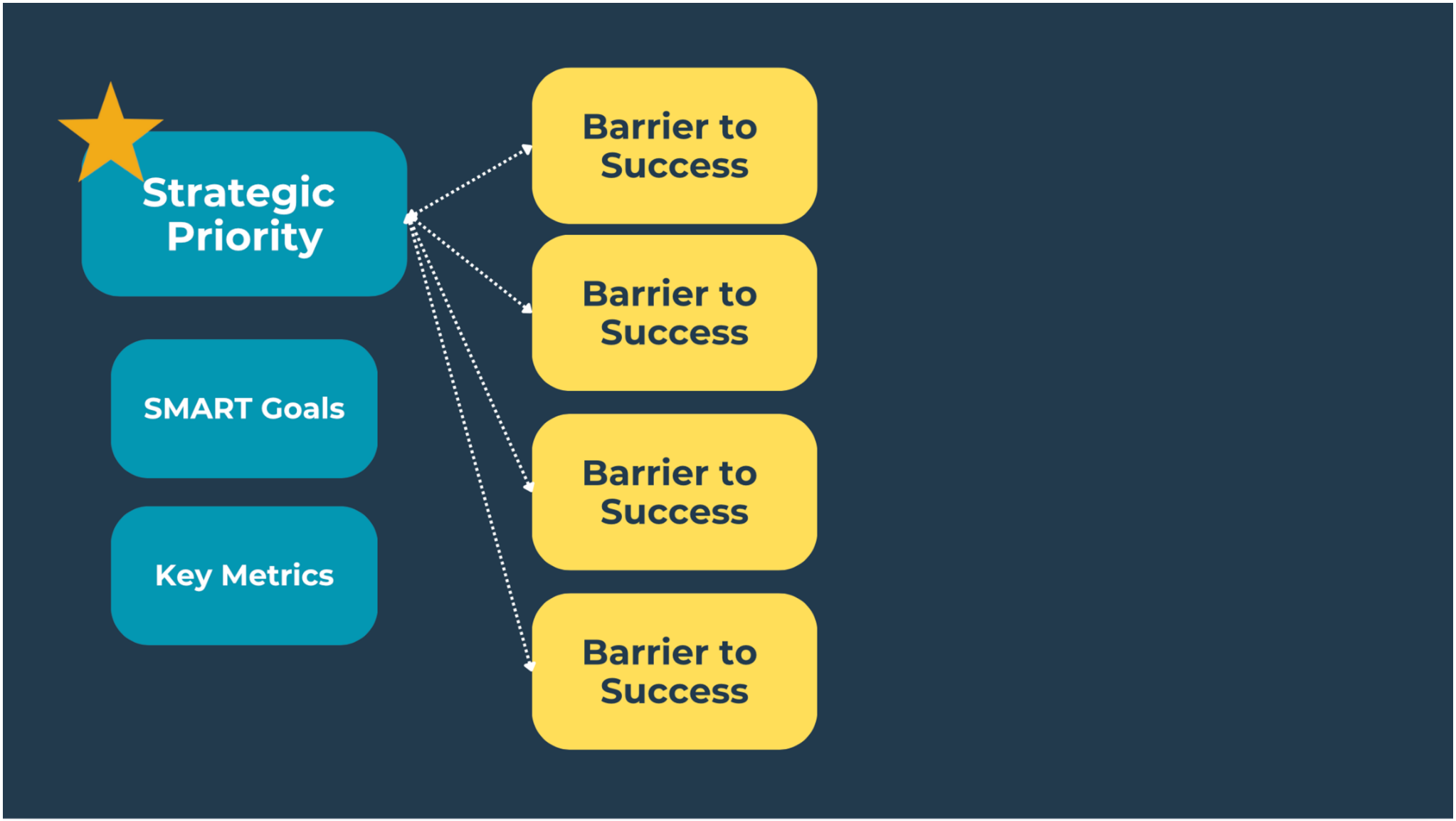
Strategic Priority

SMART Goals

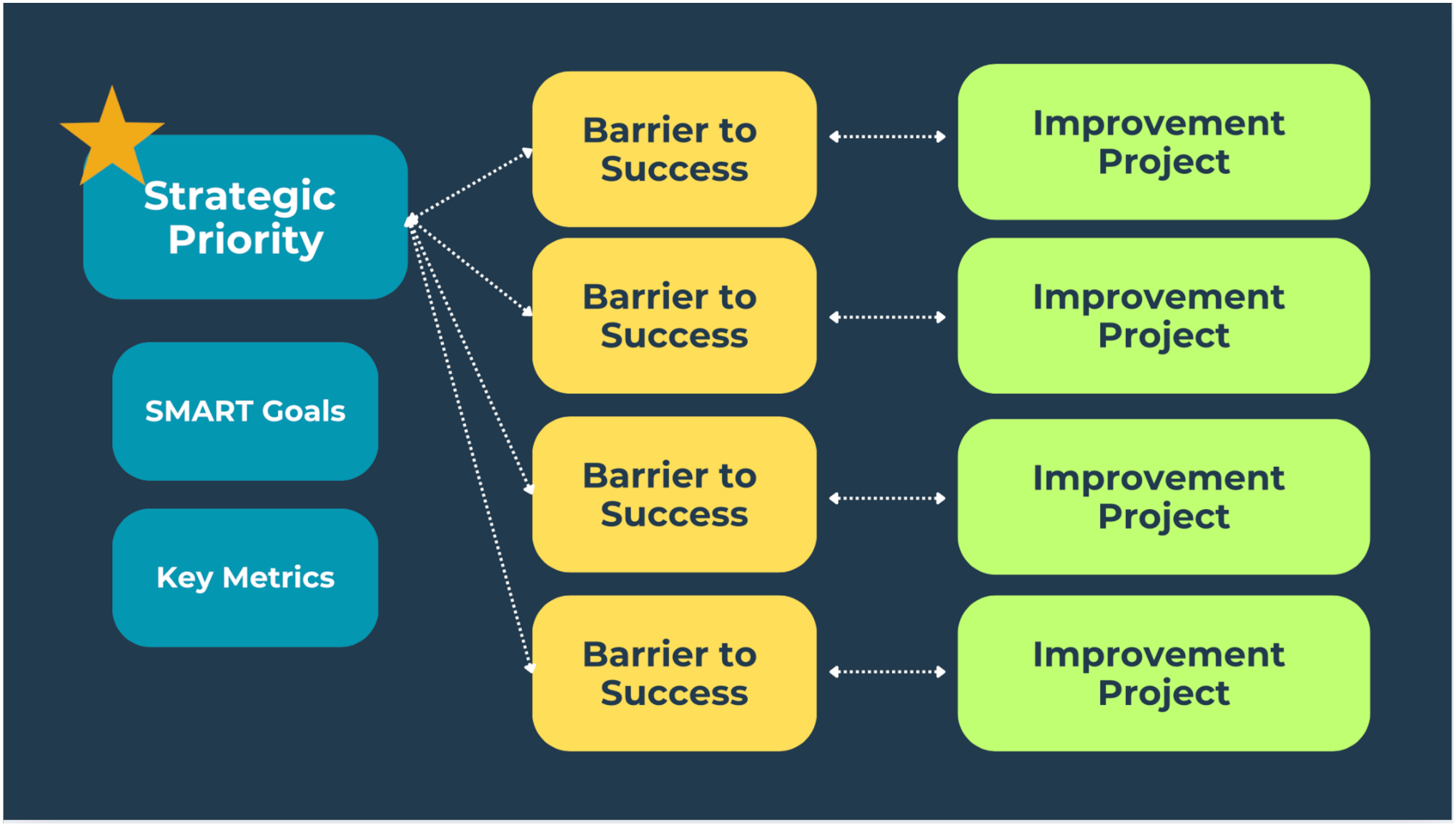
Key Metrics

How will you know you are successful?

What metrics are available to you?
What do you need to know?

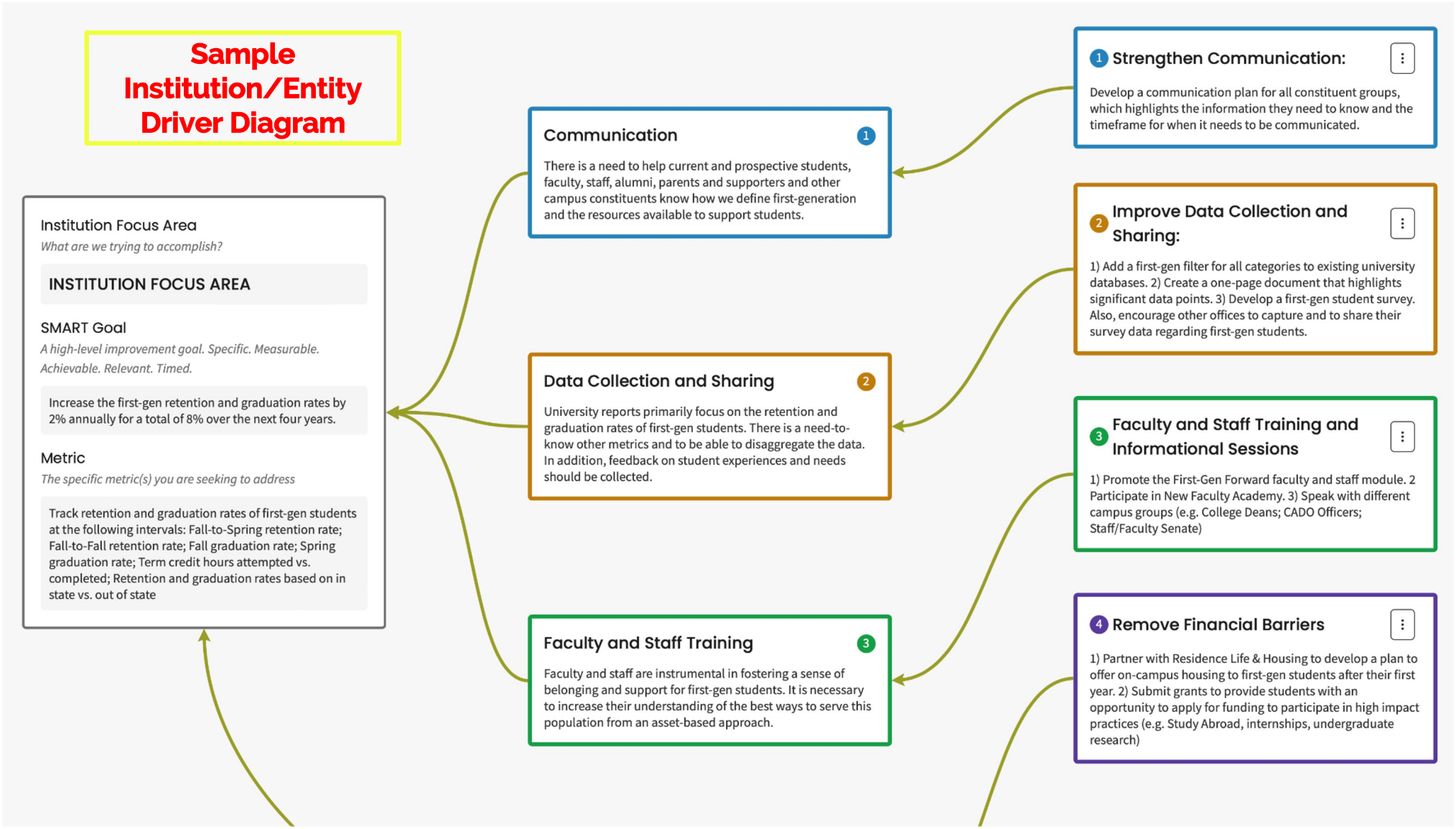

Strategic Priority
SMART Goals
Key Metrics
Barrier to Success
Barrier to Success
Barrier to Success
Barrier to Success

What are your greatest barriers or challenges to solving or challenge or achieving your desired goals?


Strategic Priority
SMART Goals
Key Metrics
Barrier to Success
Barrier to Success
Barrier to Success
Barrier to Success
Improvement Project
Improvement Project
Improvement Project
Improvement Project

What are the improvement projects that directly solve your challenges or barriers?

Sample Institution/Entity Driver Diagram



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Moving Plan to Action

Improvement Project #1: *<description>*

30 Days

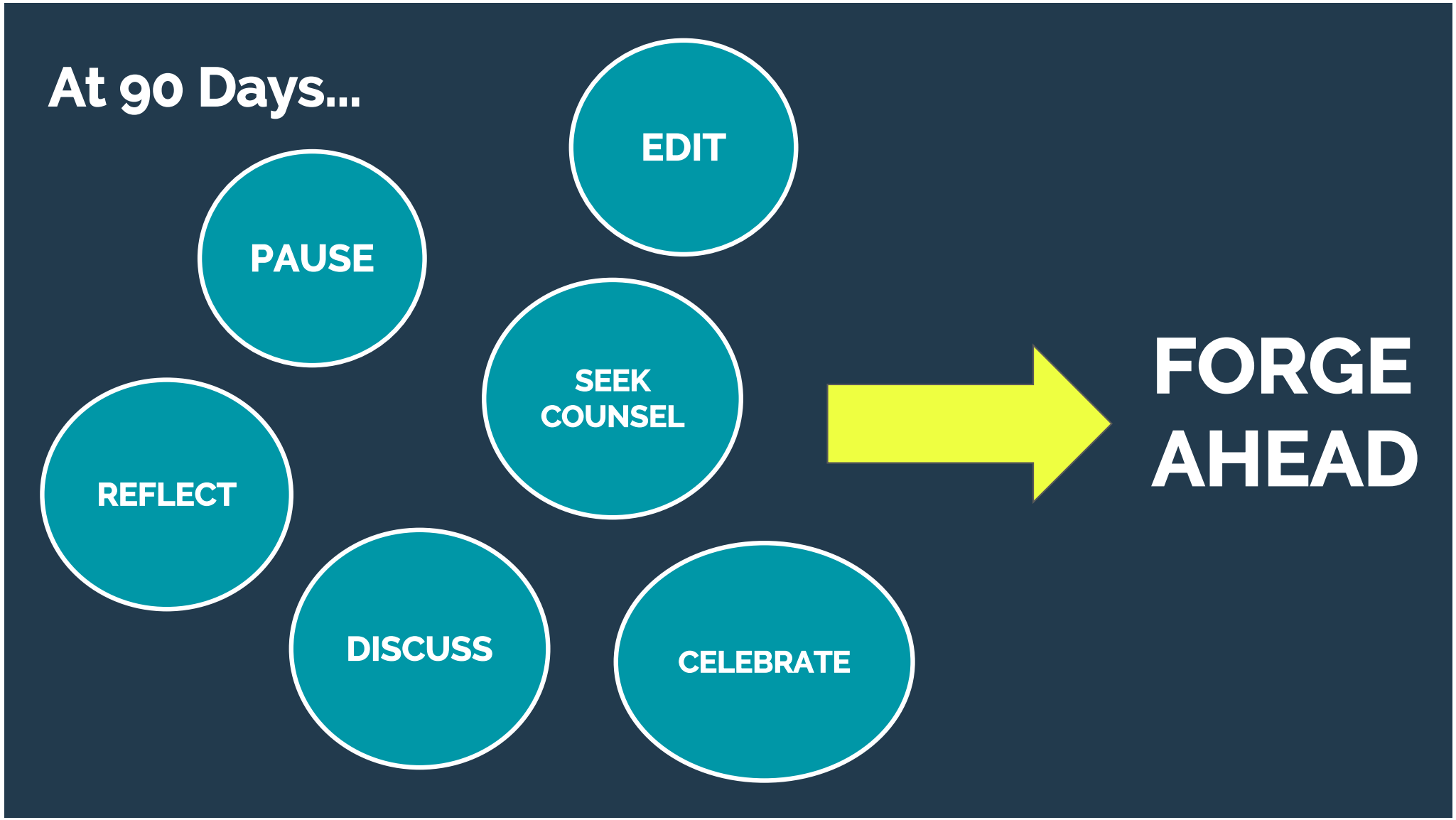
- Tasks
- Timeline
- Responsible Party
- Completion Tracking

60 Days

- Tasks
- Timeline
- Responsible Party
- Completion Tracking

90 Days

- Tasks
- Timeline
- Responsible Party
- Completion Tracking


At 90 Days...
EDIT
PAUSE
SEEK COUNSEL
REFLECT
DISCUSS
CELEBRATE
FORGE AHEAD

Project Management

Who are the key people you need on your team?

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A Few Considerations

Continuous Improvement Requires Change Management

Adopting Proven Strategies Can Help

Integrated Implementation Process

Pre-implementation Phase

1. Change management: Stakeholder analysis, readiness assessment, coalition building

2. Continuous improvement: Baseline measurement, gap analysis, process mapping

Practical Integration Strategies

- **Hybrid Leadership Teams**: Include change managers and improvement specialists
- **Consolidated Implementation Plans**: Merge change management and QI plans
- **Unified Metrics**: Develop measurement systems that track both technical and adaptive changes
- **Shared Learning Systems**: Create feedback mechanisms that inform both processes
- **Joint Training**: Cross-train teams in both methodologies

Driver Diagrams & Action Plans are TOOLS for YOU,

not a homework assignment for leadership.

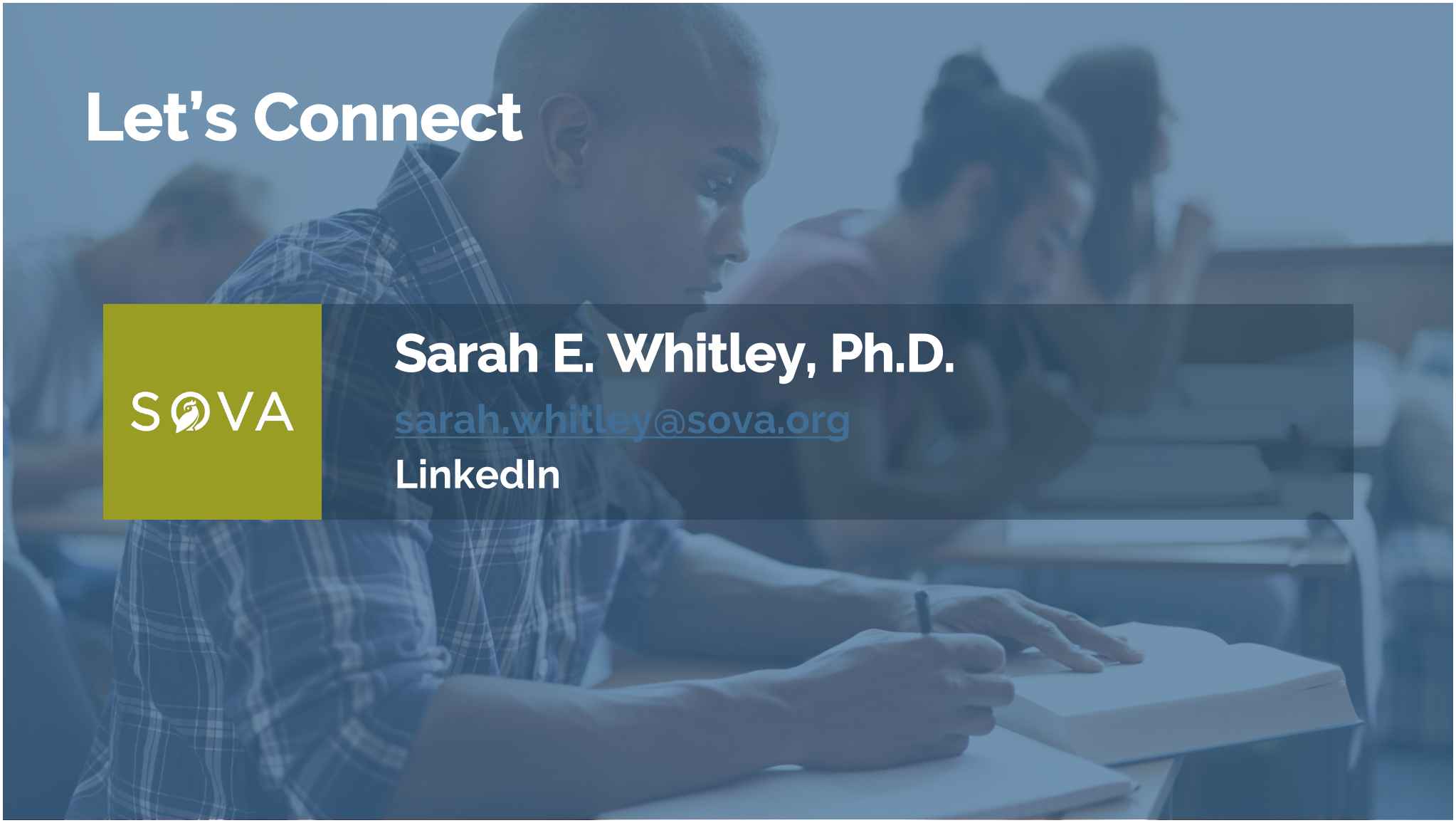
Consider Proven Implementation Strategy Research

Successful implementation occurs when explicit attention to the culture, history, values, assets, and needs of the community are integrated into the principles, strategies, frameworks, and tools of implementation science.

- **Cultural Adaptation**
- **Trusting Relationships**
- **Critical Perspectives**
- **Community-Defined Evidence**
- **Dismantling Power Structures**
- **Audience-Informed Investments and Decision-Making**

***Stanford Social Innovation Review**: Implementation at Work*

Space & Grace


Let's Connect
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