ELEVATE NP of southwestern pa

The Bridgespan Group
Collaborating to accelerate social impact

INTRODUCTION TO NONPROFIT SCENARIO PLANNING

October 7, 2025

What is Elevate NP?

We are creating a **stable, connected and accessible network of capacity-building resources** that builds on existing assets, fills gaps in service and connects nonprofit organizations to high-quality, effective solutions to maximize their community impact.

Long-term needs meet the **urgency of the moment**

Assessment + Navigation

Financial Management

Fundraising

Talent and Governance

Strategic Change

- Elevate NP of SWPA

Introduction to Nonprofit Scenario Planning

October 7, 2025
12:00 – 1:00pm ET

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Collaborating to accelerate social impact

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About The Bridgespan Group

The Bridgespan Group is a global nonprofit organization that collaborates with mission-driven leaders, organizations, and philanthropists, to make the world more equitable and just.

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Friendly reminders

After today's webinar, we'll send you:

- Webinar recording and slides
- Links to all the resources we mention today
- Link to apply for in-person clinic "Navigating Uncertainty Together" to apply today's content with your peers

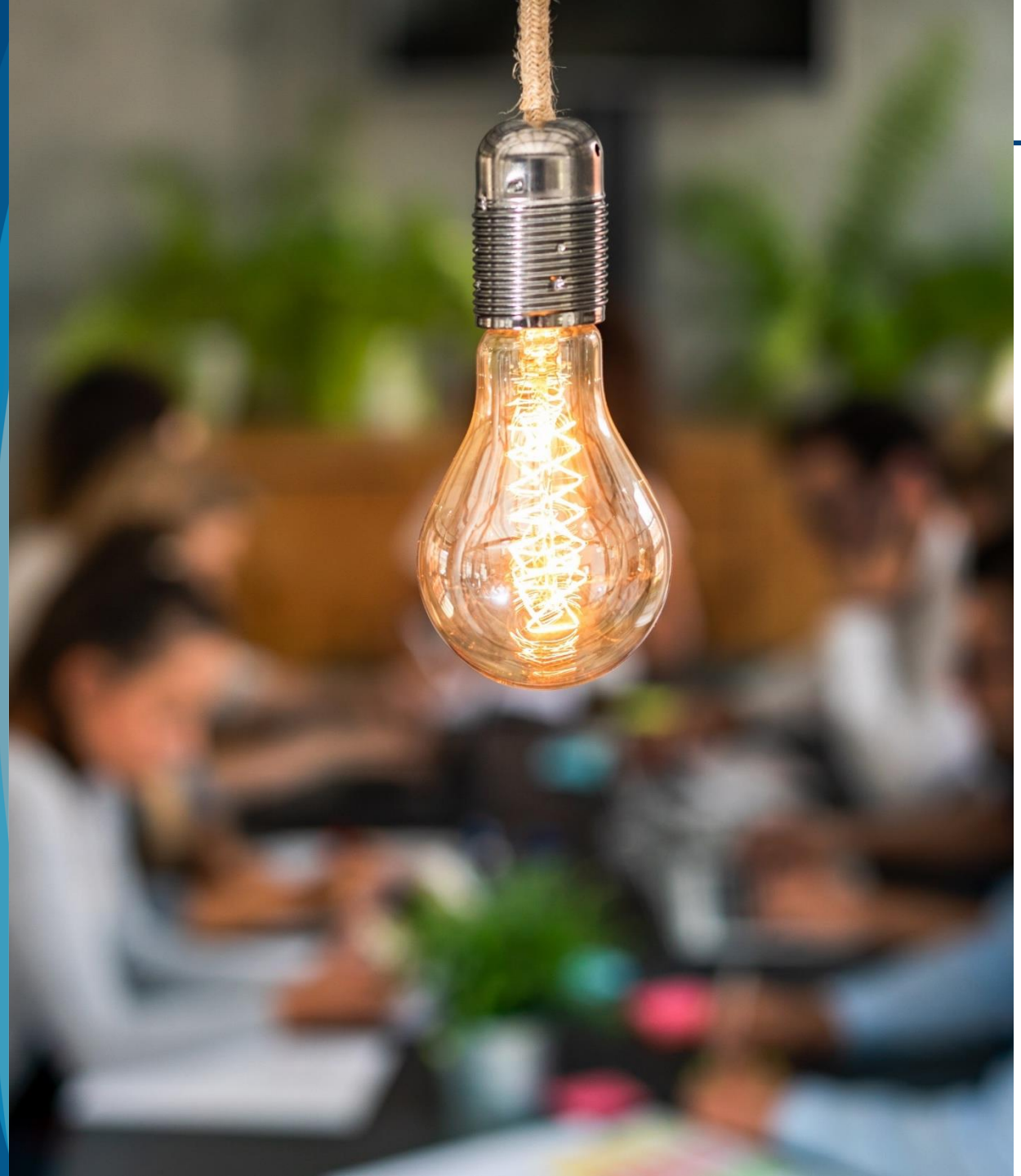
Use Q&A feature to submit your questions throughout the webinar

Please complete the post-webinar survey

We value your feedback!

Why we're here today...

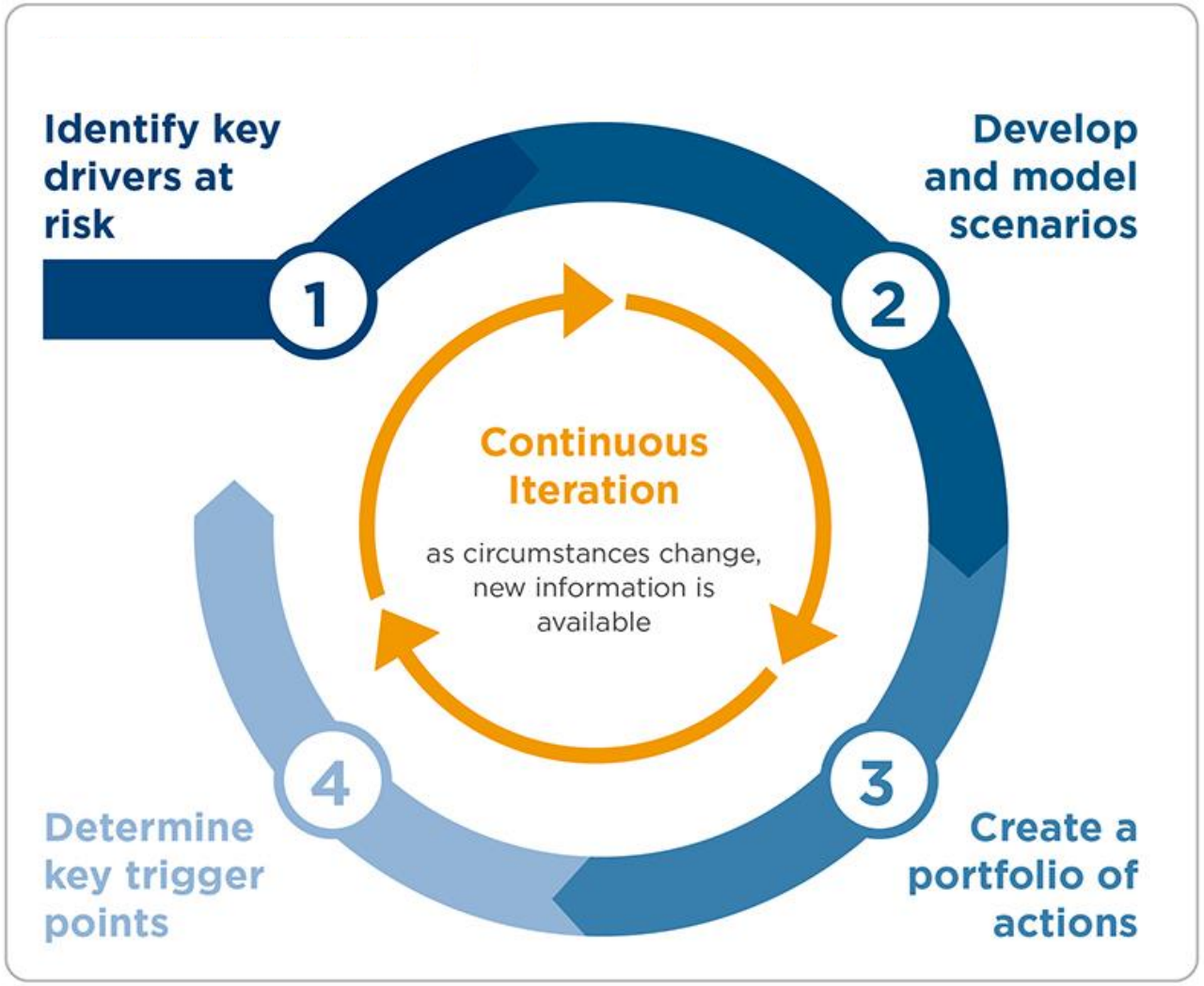
- As nonprofit leaders, we are facing **unprecedented levels of disruption**
- A slate of **executive orders, funding freezes, and reductions to the federal workforce** are directly impacting our work
  - Blocks, delays, losses of funding
  - Heightened scrutiny, threats to nonprofit status
  - Strategic and operational pivots
- Decisions are being rolled out rapidly, **many are being challenged in court, driving confusion** amid a fluctuating legal landscape
- In moments like these, **scenario planning can help us make sense of uncertainty**



What's on your mind?

What is ONE of the key risks or uncertainties your organization is facing today?

Scenario planning provides structure to inform decisions amid uncertainty



Source: The Bridgespan Group

Guiding principles help ensure decisions are rooted in your values

Categories of principles	Examples of guiding principles
Protect the mission	• We will find ways to safely and effectively **continue our core programs** • We will **prioritize activities where there is greatest need** in the communities we serve
Put people first	• We will prioritize the **well-being of our people** • We are invested in the **long-term careers** of our team members
Focus on financial resilience	• We will aggressively **protect revenue streams before cutting** critical expenses • We will preserve the **long-term financial health** of our organization

Source: Source: *A Compass for the Crisis: Nonprofit Decision Making in the COVID-19 Pandemic*, Lindsey Waldron and Preeta Nayak, Bridgespan.org

STEP 1: Identify key drivers of impact and economics at risk

1

IDENTIFY KEY DRIVERS AT RISK → Develop and model scenarios → Create portfolio of actions → Determine key trigger points

- What are the primary **drivers of your impact and economics**?
- What are the **biggest risks / uncertainties** associated with them?

TIP: Don’t get distracted by small stuff

STEP 1: Identify key drivers of impact and economics at risk [example]

		Likelihood?	Magnitude?
PROGRAMS	• **Changing needs of the people you serve**	**HIGH**	**HIGH**
	• Programmatic approach	*MED*	*HIGH*
	• Restrictions in doing the work	*MED*	*HIGH*
	• External partners	*MED*	*MED*
OPERATIONS	• **Threats of legal action**	**HIGH**	**HIGH**
	• Reputational risk	*MED*	*MED*
	• Protecting core operations – systems, facilities, etc.	*LOW*	*MED*
	• **Differentially affected staff**	**HIGH**	**HIGH**
	• Managing leadership and organizational capacity	*LOW*	*LOW*
FUNDING	• **Government funding streams**	**HIGH**	**HIGH**
	• **Philanthropic funding**	**HIGH**	**HIGH**
	• Earned revenue	*HIGH*	*LOW*

STEP 2: Develop and model scenarios

2

Identify key drivers at risk | **DEVELOP AND MODEL SCENARIOS** | Create portfolio of actions | Determine key trigger points

- Construct **best-, moderate-, and worst-case scenarios** anchored in these key drivers and uncertainties, that reflect the full spectrum of possible outcomes
- **Translate these scenarios into their related budgetary impact**
- **Consider ~6-12-month time horizons** for each scenario to understand their potential impact

TIP: Don't underestimate

TIP: Precision isn't the goal

STEP 2: Develop and model scenarios

/ EXAMPLE

		BEST CASE	MODERATE CASE	WORST CASE
Programs	**Changing needs of our patients**	• Lose some patients due to increased stress in the environment	• Reduction in HRSA, Medicaid payments affect patient access	• Significant reductions in self pay, Medicaid visits, and 340B program patients
	External partners	• No impact	• Increase the load on our programs as other local agencies' ability to offer services decreases	• Dramatic increase the load on our programs as other local agencies forced to shut down
Operations	**Differentially affected staff**	• Minimal impact	• Begin to lose staff from targeted populations	• Significant staff loss
	Threats of legal action	• No impact	• ICE takes action	• Nonprofit status threatened
Funding	**Government funding**	• No change in grant commitment	• Moderate impact on key grant due to lower patient numbers • Migrant grant is ended	• Key grant in total is revoked • Program funding is revoked

STEP 3: Create a portfolio of actions

3

Identify key drivers at risk → Develop and model scenarios → **CREATE PORTFOLIO OF ACTIONS** → Determine key trigger points

Appropriate for any scenario

"No regrets" actions with positive benefits under any scenario

Example: Review and determine if updates are needed to HR policies; secure a crisis communications resource; legal review

Smaller-scale, flexible "handbrakes"

Actions that can be executed quickly and reversed, if needed, as circumstances change

Example: Offer unpaid leave; temporarily reduce executive compensation

Larger and more permanent

Actions that reflect significant investments, cost reductions or operational changes

Example: Close a program site, lay off staff, or revise a strategy, based on political or funding changes

STEP 3: Create a portfolio of actions

3

/ EXAMPLE

Action	Operational implications	Economic impact (cost) or savings	Category
1 Terminate lease on unused space		$10,000	No regrets
2 Delay filling open positions	Redeploy current staff	$150,000	No regrets
3 Increase food pantry hours	More volunteers	**($5,000)**	Flexible
4 Suspend 401K match		$200,000	Flexible
5 Install security cameras		**($6,000)**	Flexible
6 Hire security guard		**($30,000)**	Flexible
7 Reduce management salary by 10%		$25,000	Flexible
8 Furlough 10% of advocacy staff		$50,000	Flexible
9 Layoff advocacy staff		$450,000	Major
10 Lay off program staff (government program)	Need to address reduction in admin	$500,000	Major
		Total net savings	
		$1,344,000	

STEP 4: Create a portfolio of actions

4

Identify key drivers at risk → Develop and model scenarios → Create portfolio of actions → **DETERMINE KEY TRIGGER POINTS**

Trigger point could be an EVENT

If X contract falls through, or program volume drops to XX, we'll pause the program / furlough staff

Trigger point could be a DATE

By X date, we'll need to decide whether to move forward with (or cancel) annual organization retreat

TIP: Establish (or update) your decision processes and roles so that you're ready to act when needed

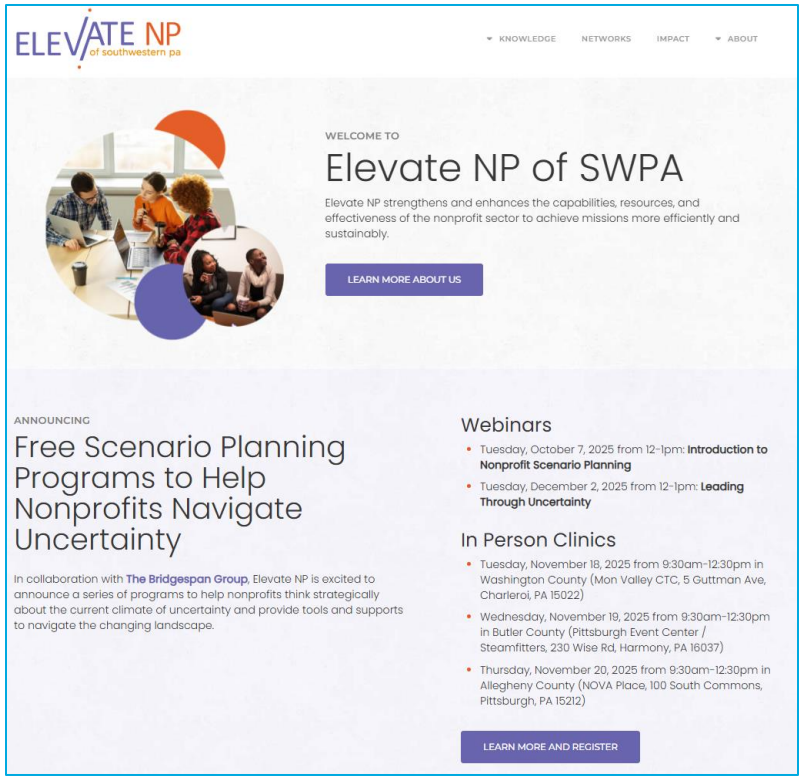
Questions

What questions do you have about applying this approach with your organization?

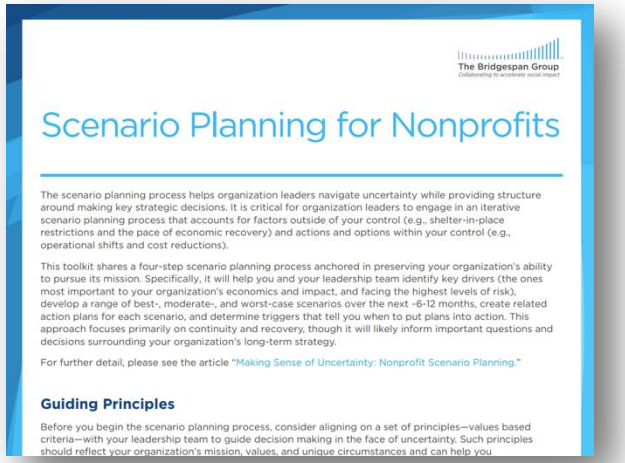
Getting started

- Talk to your Board and **senior team** (don't do this alone!)
- Identify the **most important risks** facing your organization in this moment
  - Seek **outside expertise** (e.g., legal counsel) where needed to help **identify and mitigate risk**
- Start **codifying (or refining) the likely scenarios** you may encounter
- Don't wait on **"no regrets" actions**

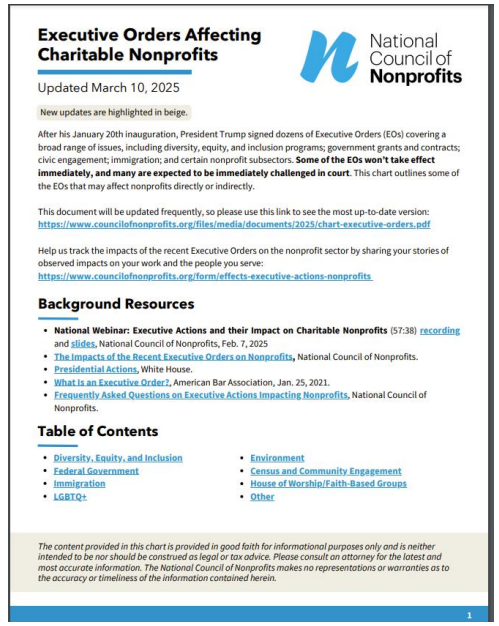
Additional resources



https://elevatenpswpa.org/



Scenario Planning Toolkit and other resources available on Bridgespan.org



National Council of Nonprofits' updated tracking of executive orders

In the chat: What other resources have you found helpful in navigating the current moment?

Learn more about Bridgespan's cohort services for nonprofit leadership teams

Bridgespan's Leadership Accelerator

Bridgespan's Leadership Accelerator program offers four self-paced programs for leadership teams interested in addressing a specific strategy or management challenge. Programs range from 10-18 weeks in length.
www.bspan.org/BLA

Achieving Strategic Clarity

Get clarity on your organization's impact goals and programs

Creating an Adaptive Plan

Create a dynamic plan to navigate uncertainty with confidence

Strengthening the Executive Team

Unlock your team's full potential

Investing in Future Leaders

Create a strategic and equitable approach for developing your talent

Navigating Uncertainty Together Clinics

Apply by October 17!

- Washington County / Tuesday, November 18
- Butler County / Wednesday, November 19
- Allegheny County / Thursday, November 20

Intended for:

- Executive Directors with an optional +1
- Budgets $250k – $5M
- Any mission except political advocacy

Exploring Nonprofit Mergers and Collaborations

Register Now!

Tuesday, December 2 from 12-1pm

Thanks for joining!

Questions? Feedback?

info@elevatenpswpa.org

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