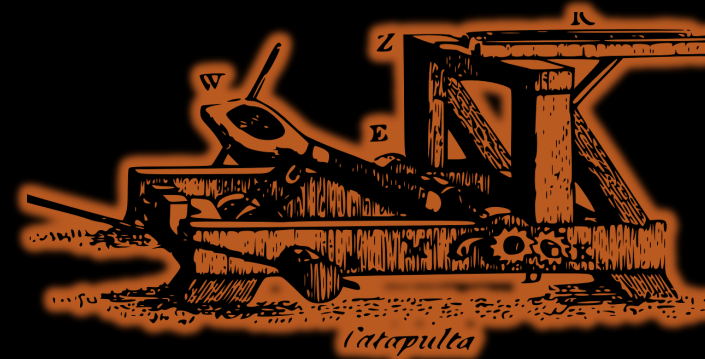# Project Catapult Leadership and Learning Lab: What did we learn?
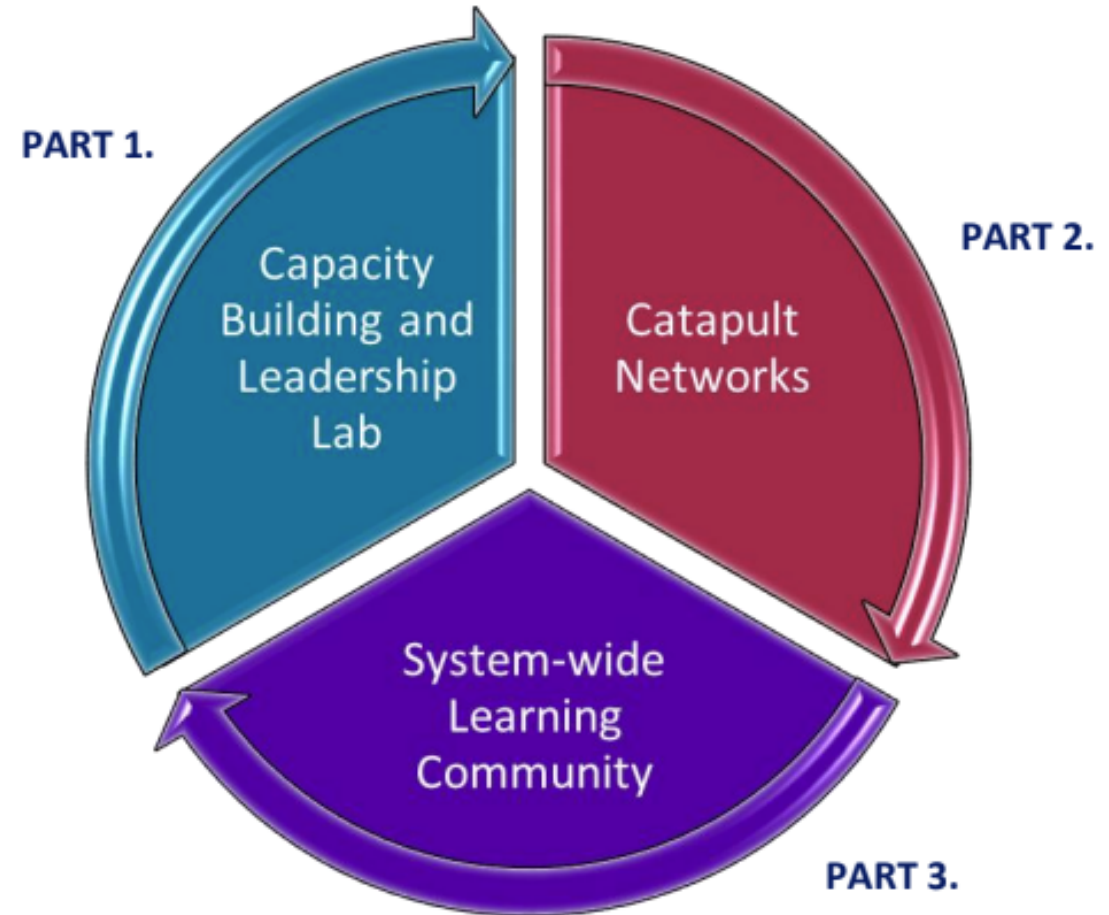

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Vision for greater Boston's Workforce System

Project Catapult: As it was conceived about 18 months ago

PART 1. Capacity Building and Leadership Lab

PART 2. Catapult Networks

PART 3. System-wide Learning Community

Catapult Goals:

1. For the Leadership and learning Lab
   a. Improved capacity of participating organizations on one or more of the competencies
   b. The development of one or more sector-based networks of delivery across the entire client continuum
2. For Catapult Networks
   a. Improved outcomes for jobseekers and incumbent workers
   b. Improved outcomes for employers
3. For the Workforce Development System in the region

Project Catapult Learning Lab Goals

Build capacity ……..to create greater scale and impact……..on four critical competencies :

- Be Market Responsive

- Focus on Good Jobs

- Create Impact

- Lift Untapped Talent

Leverage that new capacity to drive better outcomes for jobseekers and employers

Characteristics of a Successful Learning Community?[1]

- Design for Success
  - Make it relevant
  - Think about the 'who'
  - Inspire a collective and bold vision

- Execute for Success
  - Embrace fluid structure
  - Create a safe space for learning and risk taking
  - Provide the resources –facilitation, small projects, research and dissemination of learning.

- Extend the Success
  - Be open to unanticipated outcomes
  - Put intentional learning practices in place
  - Help integrate learning into day-to day work

1. "What Makes a Successful Learning Community, *Grantmakers for Effective Organizations*

What have we learned?
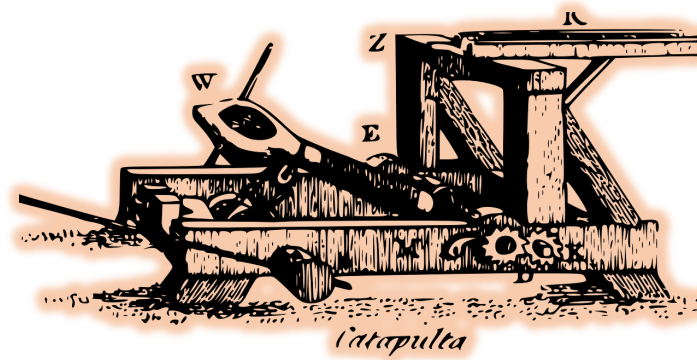
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Design for Success

Successes

✓ Bold vision for Project Catapult to go to "Next Generation Workforce Solutions" based on broad engagement

✓ Publication and discussion of the Catapult Papers at launch

✓ Diversity of organizations and individuals participating in the lab

Challenges

- Lab trying to be all things to all organizations & people

- Balancing act to develop a roadmap for the diverse participants

- Ambitious to ensure learning for the range of organizations

- Funder participation tricky as there was also expectation of future funding

Execute for Success

✓ **Successes**

✓ Participants embraced the structure of the lab, provided input leading to a forum for rich exchange among diversity of individuals

✓ Valuable presentations from employers, workforce development leaders

✓ Participants provided a lot of input on the execution

Areas for Improvement

- Tough to facilitate a session for organizations/individuals with different goals

- Safe space might have been challenging with funder presence

- Catapult papers, other publications, and more tools could have been used

- COVID interrupted> not all competencies addressed

Extend for Success

<u>Successes</u>

✓ Though focus was on capacity building, coaches responded by discussing systemic constraints identified by participants

✓ After March labs pivoted to address pandemic related issues

✓ Important connections made among attendees will benefit future programs

Areas for Improvement

- There could have been more intentionality in building connections among attendees and drawing lessons for different participants

- Struggle to bring learning so it is applicable to day-to-day work

- After March it was about survival! Of clients! Of organizations!

Lessons Learned

1. With COVID it is all about survival! Survival of the clients! Survival of community-based organizations! Workforce development is difficult work that has become even more difficult with the pandemic

2. It is difficult to design and manage learning communities for a very diverse group with different goals

3. Next Generation Workforce Solutions: Improving outcomes depends upon improving capacity and operations and improving various factors in the ecosystem for organizations. It is tough to focus on one without discussing the other

What lessons are still relevant After the COVID19 crisis?
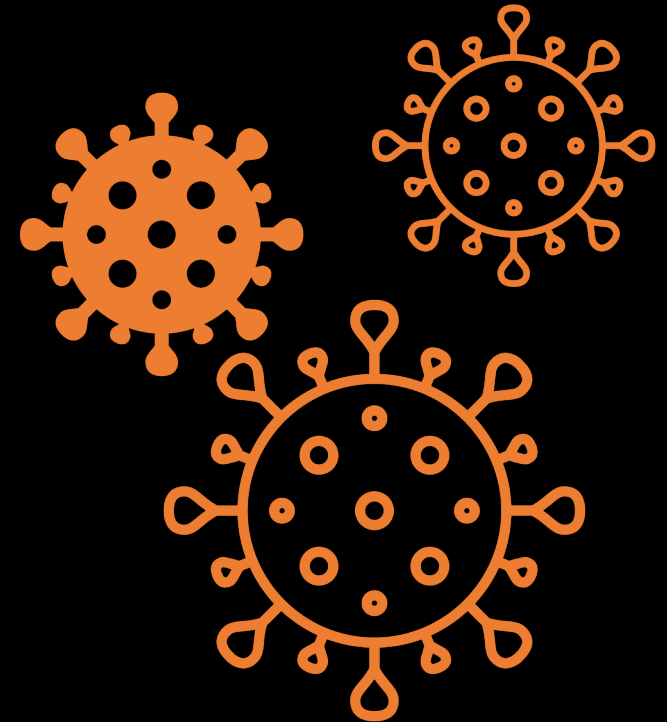
Change of Context with Covid19

- With the COVID-19 crisis the context has changed:
- In-person training and services not possible after the lockdown
- Over 370,000 (10%) fewer employed and a 9.6% unemployment rate after being as high as 18%
- Sectors such as hospitality and restaurants, will have fewer jobs for an extended period
- Even in high demand industries, e.g. healthcare, needs have changed
- Employer ability to fund and pay for services seriously affected
- Nature and importance of frontline jobs is changing
- Many businesses, non-profits and workforce agencies are struggling

Recommendations

1. Determine which of the four target competencies and associated issues are still relevant for each organization

2. Continue to engage in a learning community for building ideas and sharing practices

3. Help organizations deal with uncertainty and improve effectiveness of
   1. Changed operations —remote operations, online training, cash flow issues
   2. New and revised programs for a changed economy

4. Select one or two specific systemic problems that affect outcomes in the labor market to tackle, e.g., client support systems, transportation

'Catapult' Competencies: Continued Relevance

- ***Be Market Responsive***. Pivoting to respond to changed employer needs—
  - Use downtime for employers to engage deeply, train incumbent workers
  - Re-direct workforce programs to address immediate and emerging employer needs
- ***Focus on Good Jobs***. Importance of job quality for frontline workers and healthcare workers –
  - Ensure essential workers pay, paid sick leave, health care coverage, other benefits
  - Engage employers and policymakers to maintain worker pay, benefits after the crisis
- ***Create Impact***. Improve operations for remote services:
  - Technology for remote operations, online learning, and tracking of data/services
  - Flexible financing and financial systems
- ***Lift Untapped Talent***. Address racial equity issues in particular:
  - How to ensure that blacks and Latinx continue to be hired