

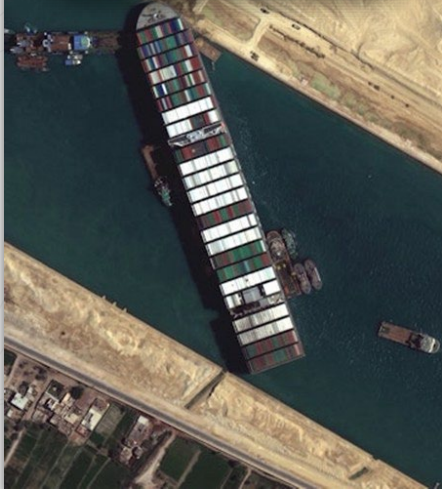
The background of the slide is a photograph of a person wearing a hat and a plaid shirt, seen from behind, looking out over a vast mountain range. The person is in a boat, and the water is visible in the foreground. The mountains are rugged and have some snow patches. The entire image is overlaid with a dark blue semi-transparent layer that contains the title text and the speaker information.

Beyond the Checklist – Institutionalizing Readiness in an Age of Compounding Disasters

Josh Bowen, CD, MBA, MADEM, ABCP
Calgary, June 2, 2025

What's The Impact?

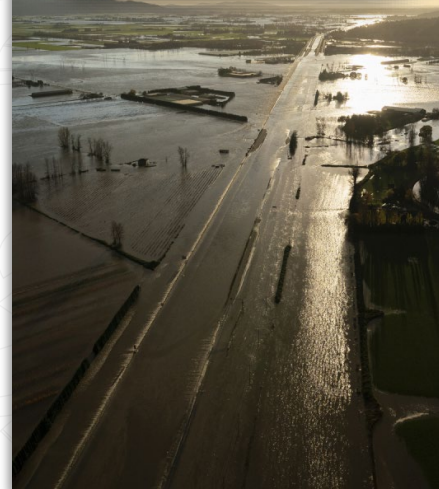
10 Weeks Global
Supply Chain
Disruption



87% of British
Pensions



5% Provincial GDP
Hit



39% of
Reinsurance
Market



>60% of
Canadians plan to
reduce donations

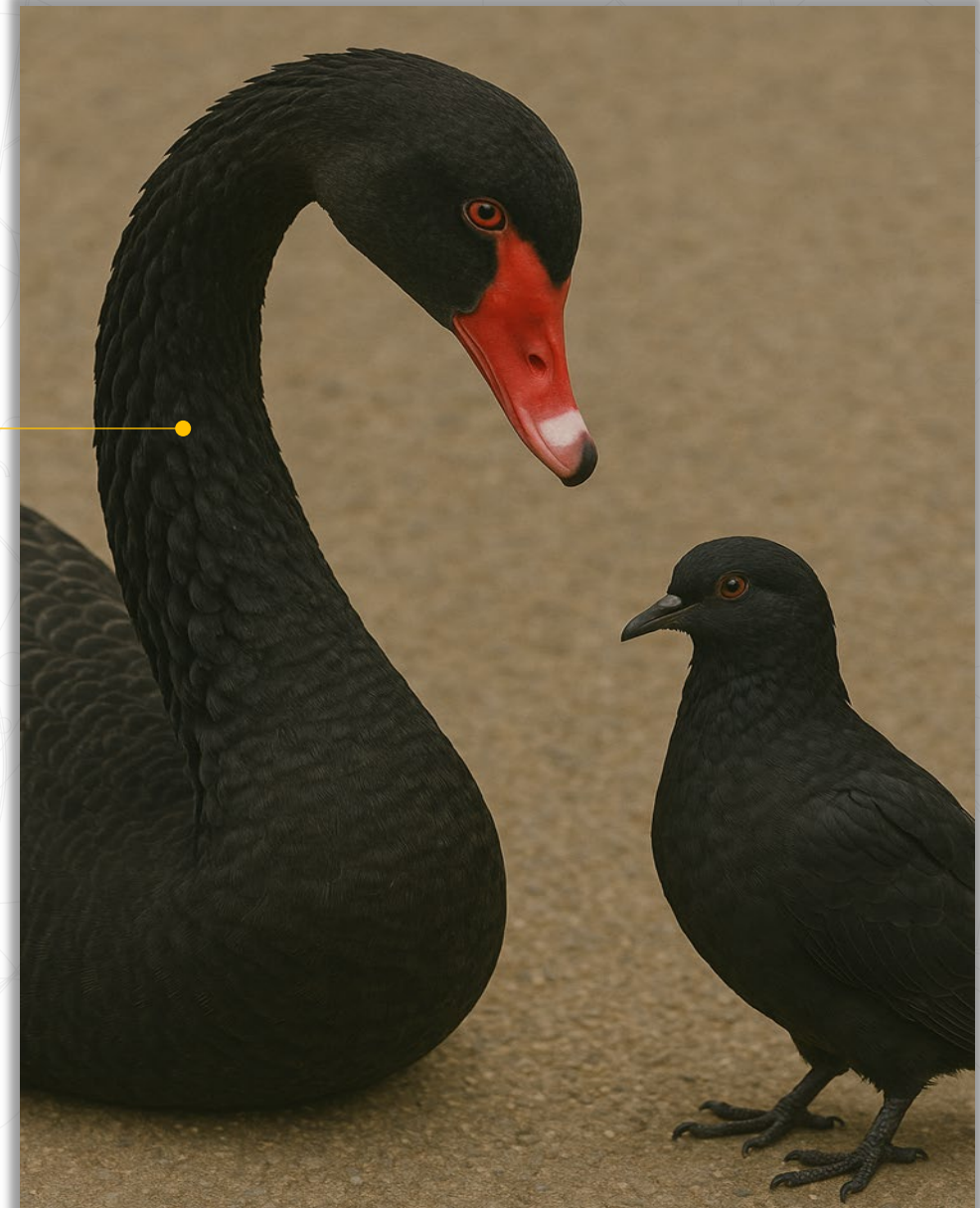


Our Challenge

Black Swans have become pigeons.

Continuity plans alone are no longer enough.

We must build organizations that thrive in uncertainty.



Our Challenge

Does your organization **react**
to disruptions...

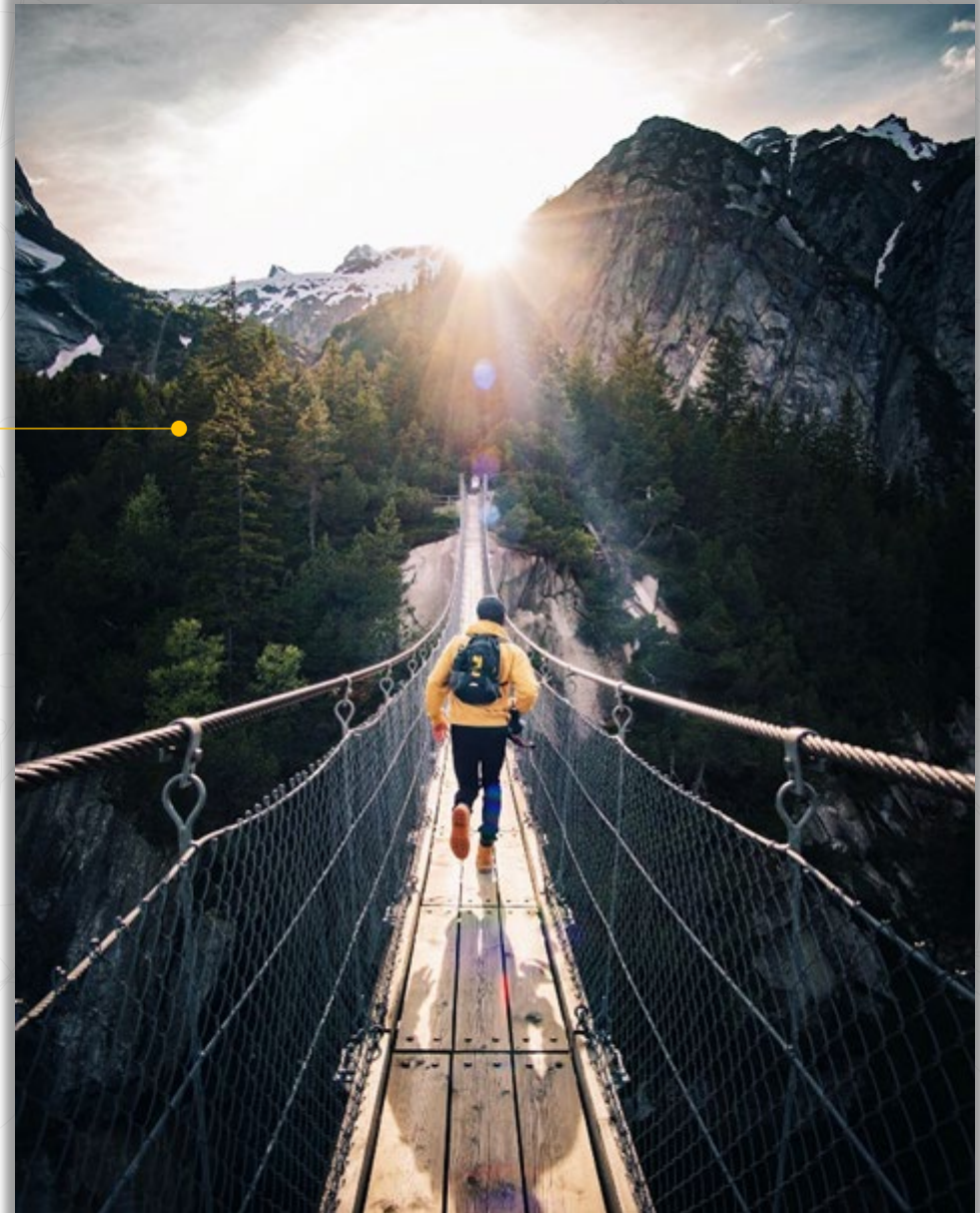
...or is it truly **ready** for them?



Preparedness is The Problem

Preparedness is often checklists, plans, and static assumptions.

Reactive systems falter in prolonged or compounding crises.



Preparedness is The Problem

“Everyone has a plan until they
get punched in the mouth.”

- Mike Tyson



Preparedness vs Readiness

Preparedness



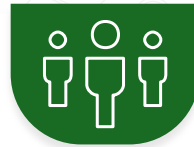
- Activities-based
- Static plans
- Training & stockpiling
- Episodic

Readiness



- Culture-based
- Adaptive systems
- Mission-driven reflexes
- Continuous

Strategic Priorities



Organizational Design

How we structure for adaptability and action



Prioritize Readiness

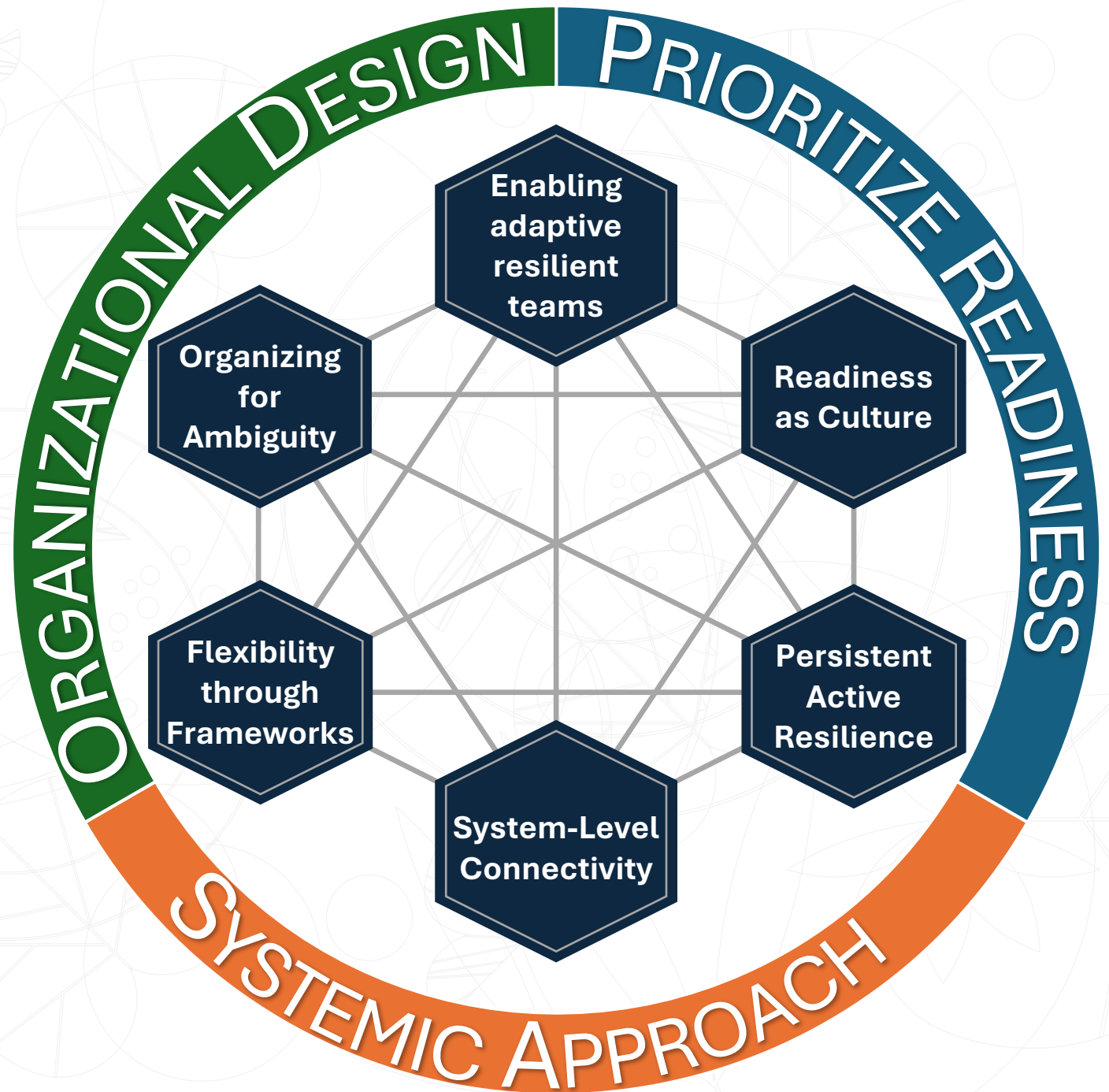
How we embed readiness in culture and practice



Systemic Approach

How we understand and operate within complex systems

Elements of Institutional Readiness





Persistent Active Resilience

“I don't think we're very good at capturing what we've learned and implementing it in a way that helps us the next time”



Persistent Active Resilience

- Resilience is learning forward.
- Continuous improvement loops (AARs, Red Cell reviews).
- Retrospectives built into operations.



Persistent Active Resilience

Resilience is not about bouncing back—it's about learning forward, embedding continuous improvement into every operational cycle.

Readiness As Culture

“[Readiness happens when] we’re practicing, we’re talking about it, it’s an everyday habit that we’re living.”



Readiness As Culture

- Make readiness part of how people think and act.
- Storytelling, recognition, and leadership modeling.
- Institutionalize via onboarding, training, and review systems.



Readiness As Culture

True readiness lives in everyday behaviours, where adaptability and anticipation are practiced as cultural norms, not compliance tasks.





Flexibility through Frameworks

“Plans are malleable, they’re scalable... they’re a blueprint, but everything is situationally dependent.”



Flexibility through Frameworks

- Decision scaffolding: decision support templates, scenario planning, adaptive budgeting.
- Embrace ambiguity with confidence.
- Frameworks give permission to adapt.



Flexibility through Frameworks

Frameworks provide the structure and permission to improvise, enabling teams to act decisively in complex, evolving situations.

Organizing for Ambiguity

“The differentiation between the governance model during regular times and during an emergency needs to be more closely aligned... The sweet spot is a model where once that switch is flicked up, the model does not deviate too much.”



Organizing for Ambiguity

- Design structures that flex, not break.
- Frameworks for mission-driven action under uncertainty.
- Align governance between "steady state" and "crisis mode."



Organizing for Ambiguity

Adaptive organizations structure themselves to flex under pressure, empowering action without needing all the answers.





System-Level Connectivity

“The second biggest challenge is figuring out how to actually work with each other.”



System-Level Connectivity

- No one operates alone in a crisis.
- Map dependencies and interdependencies.
- Build shared situational awareness across sectors and teams.



System-Level Connectivity

No organization operates in isolation; readiness depends on building trust, shared awareness, and functional relationships across systems.

Enabling Adaptive Resilient Teams

“We’ve got our engineer brains on our team. We’ve got our academics. We’ve got our geeks. We’ve got all types, and you need it. You need a community to build an emergency management program. So, build a good team.”



Enabling Adaptive Resilient Teams

- Train for complexity, not just compliance.
- Psychological safety + decentralized authority = resilience.
- Adaptive leadership can and must be learned.

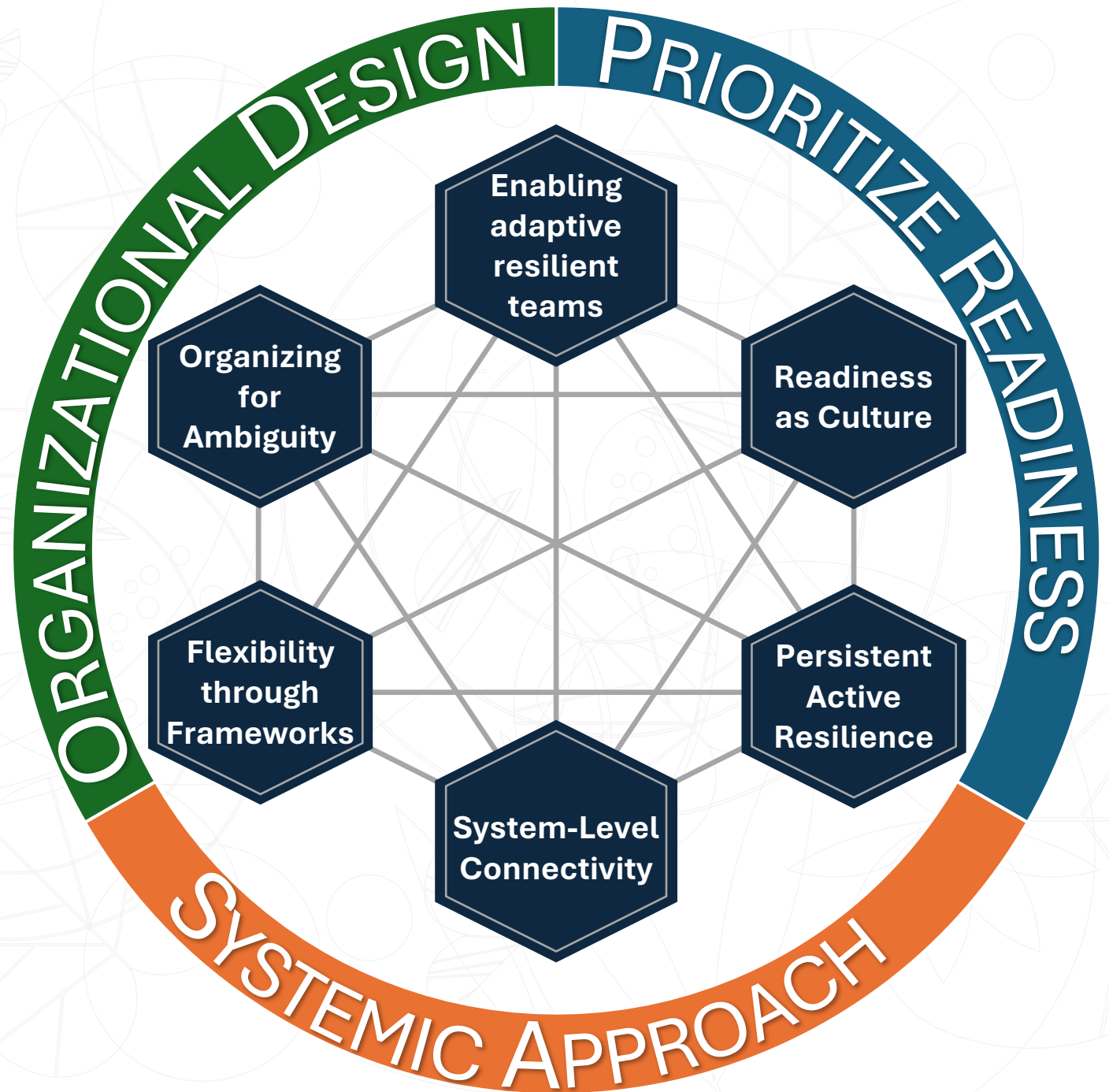


Enabling Adaptive Resilient Teams

Adaptive resilient teams are built through diversity, trust, and decentralized authority—empowering people to lead from every seat.



Elements of Institutional Readiness



A cyclist is riding on a dark, winding road that curves through a lush, green mountainous landscape. The road is paved and has a white line marking. The cyclist is wearing a blue jersey and a backpack. In the background, there are steep, rocky cliffs and a clear blue sky. The overall scene is bright and scenic.

Three Questions

- ❑ Are you building plans—or are you ***building the capacity*** to adapt when the plan fails?
- ❑ Where in your organization is ***readiness lived as a daily habit***, and where is it just paperwork?
- ❑ If a crisis hit tomorrow that exposed the gaps eight layers down—***would your organization*** bend, break, or ***lead***?