

How to Build Credibility in a Modern World

Council of State Governments

Facilitator: Jennifer-NeToi Claiborne, Leadership Facilitator



PARTNERSHIP
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE

About the Partnership

The Partnership for Public Service is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization that is building a better government and a stronger democracy.

Federal Talent

Government recruits, empowers and retains the nation's best talent.

01



Public Service Leadership

Federal leaders are equipped to effectively achieve their agencies' missions and contribute to the public good.

02



Society's Commitment to Government

Society trusts and engages with a well-functioning government.

03



Public Service Leadership Institute

Better leaders. Better government. Stronger democracy.

Our Mission

To strengthen trust in government leadership as the preeminent source of public service leadership programs, policies and perspectives.

Our Goals



AMPLIFY

the importance of public service leadership through convening thought leaders, conducting research and publishing insights.



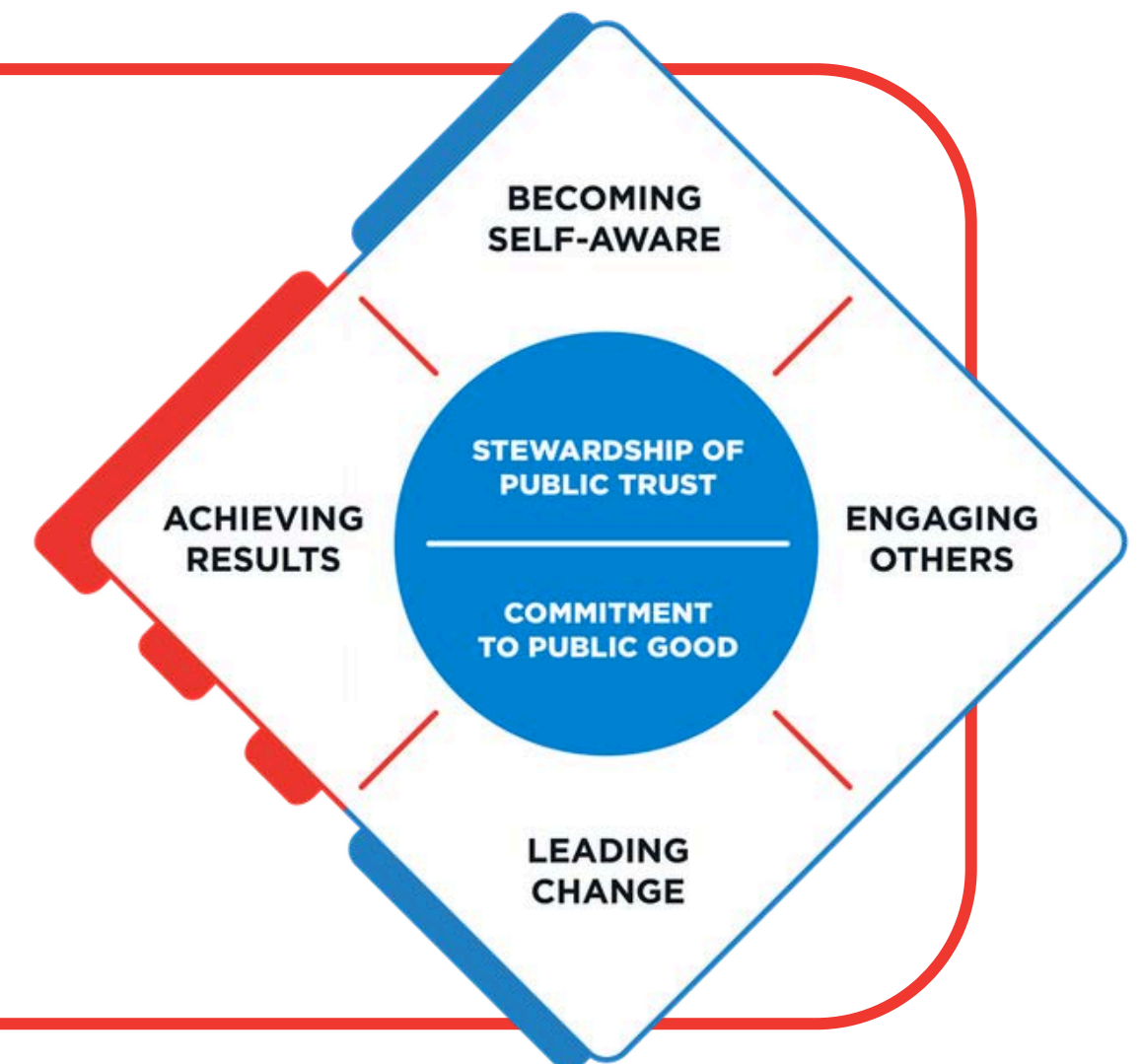
DEVELOP

public service leaders through world class programs supported by tools unique to public service leadership.



UNIFY

government around the single standard of the Public Service Leadership Model.



Public Service Leadership Model



Objectives

Recognize the behaviors and communication practices that build credibility and strengthen public trust.

Apply strategies for serving as a neutral, professional convener during challenging conversations and competing perspectives.

Develop a personalized approach to strengthening credibility through integrity, consistency, and effective communication.





Meet Your Facilitator Jennifer-NeToi Claiborne

Jennifer-NeToi Claiborne is a Leadership Facilitator, learning strategist, and writer with more than 20 years of experience developing leaders across education, nonprofit organizations, and public service.

As Leadership Facilitator and Manager of eLearning at the Partnership for Public Service's Public Service Leadership Institute, Jennifer-NeToi facilitates leadership programs including **Preparing to Lead, Developing an Innovative Mindset, Navigating Uncertainty**, and **Collaborative and Creative Thinking**. Jennifer-NeToi holds degrees from Johns Hopkins University and Jackson State University, has completed executive education at Harvard University and Louisiana State University, and is currently pursuing a Doctor of Executive Leadership.



What is credibility?



Est. 1828

Dictionary

Thesaurus

credibility

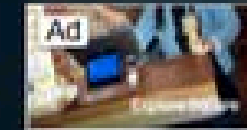


Chatbot

Games

Word of the Day

Grammar



No lock-in. No surprises. N...
Square

Get Square

Dictionary

Definition

Example Sentences

Word History

Phrases Containing

Rhymes

Entries Near

Show More

credibility noun

cred-i-bil-i-ty ,kre-də-'bi-lə-tē

Synonyms of *credibility* ? Take our 3 question quiz on *credibility*

- 1 : the quality or power of inspiring belief
| an account lacking in *credibility*
- 2 : capacity for belief
| Her account exceeds *credibility*.



credibility

noun [U]

US  /ˌkred.əˈbɪl.ə.ti/ UK  /ˌkred.əˈbɪl.ə.ti/

Add to word list 

C2

the fact that someone or something can be believed or trusted:





Credibility refers to the quality of being believable, trustworthy, and reliable. In a leader, credibility relates to the extent to which someone can be trusted and accepted. This is established through evidence, expertise, consistency, and a track record of reliability.

Jenni Field, founder of [Redefining Communications](#).



The Three Questions Everyone Is Asking

Every person unconsciously asks

Can I trust you?
Do you see me?
Will you tell me the truth?



**Every communication either answers yes...
or creates doubt.**



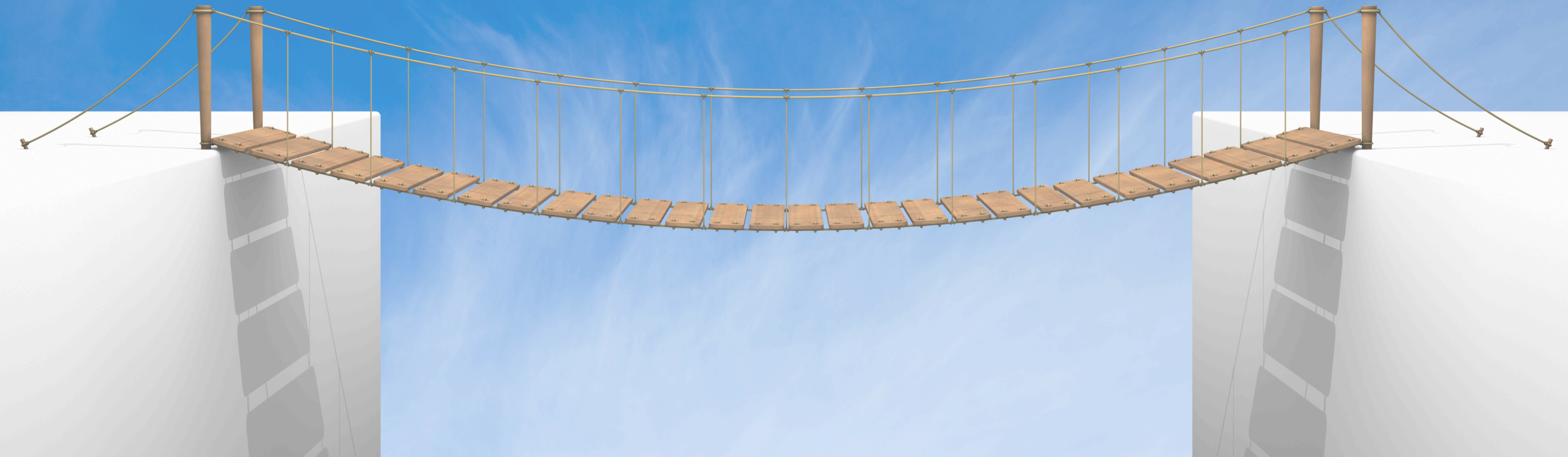
Why Credibility Matters

Credibility affects

- Decision quality
- Collaboration
- Innovation
- Employee engagement
- Conflict
- Institutional trust
- Public confidence



**Credibility is the bridge
between expertise and trust.**



Self- Awareness and Credibility

A man with a beard and a blue and white striped polo shirt is sitting on a balcony. He is holding a smartphone to his ear with his left hand and covering his face with his right hand, suggesting stress or frustration. In front of him is a laptop and a glass of water with ice. The background shows a blurred view of a residential area with buildings and greenery under a cloudy sky.

"Your actions speak so loudly that I
cannot hear what you say"

Ralph Waldo Emerson



Your Reputation Walks Into the Room Before You Do

*When colleagues hear your name...
What words immediately come to mind?*

Reliable?
Fair?
Prepared?
Collaborative?
Calm?
Objective?



Unkind?
Defensive?
Unresponsive?
Indecisive?
Difficult?
Reactive?





Living in the Fishbowl

People in public service **don't simply** communicate.
They communicate while **everyone is interpreting**.

Every email...

Every meeting...

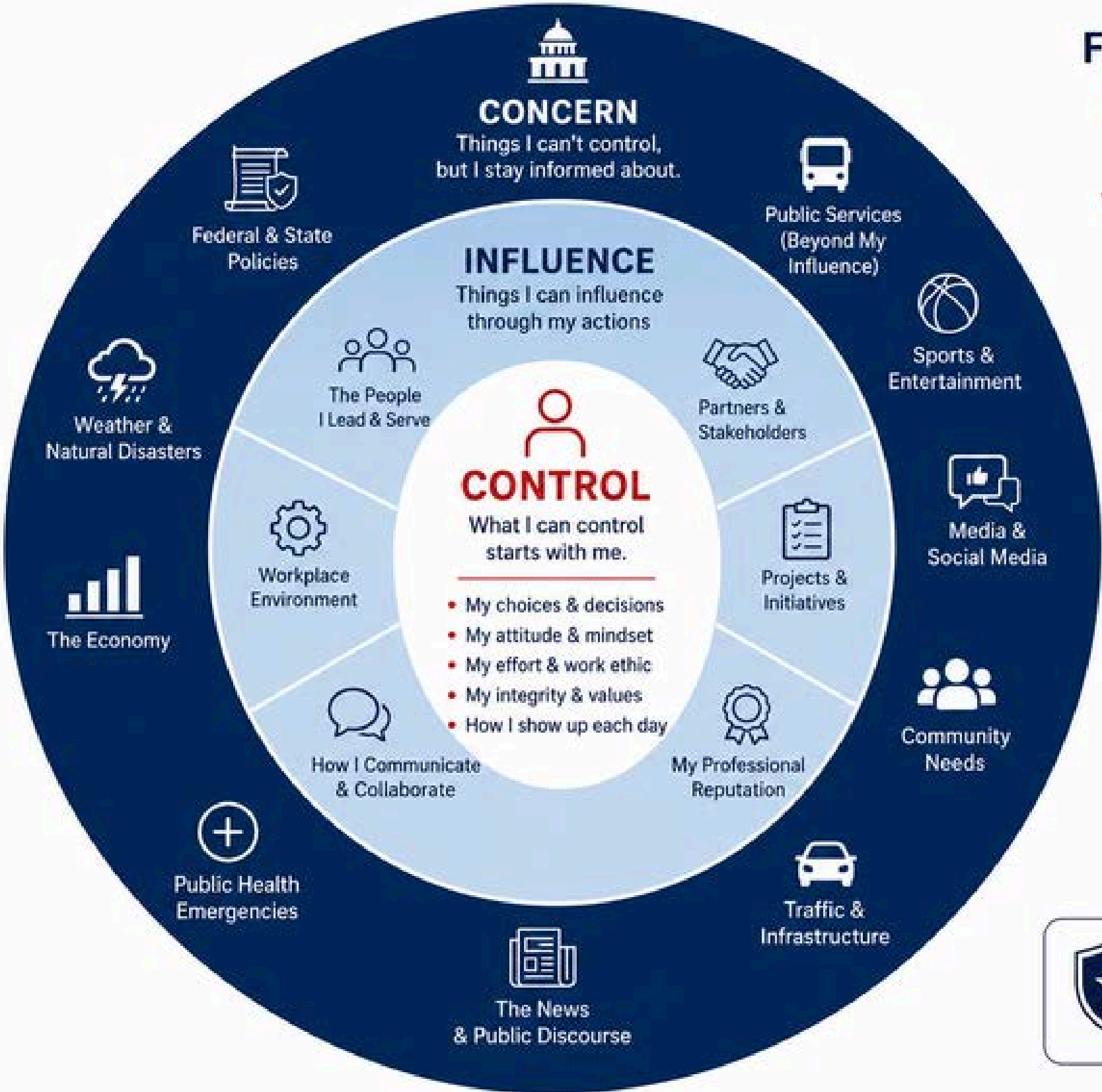
Every delay...

Every silence...

is telling a story.



Sphere of Influence



Focus What You Can Control.
Influence What You Can.
Stay Aware of the Rest.



A Public Sector Perspective



CONCERN

Stay informed and aware. These are external factors outside of my control.



INFLUENCE

Focus my energy here. I can influence outcomes through relationships, communication, and action.



CONTROL

Start here. This is where I have full control and the greatest impact.



Serving the public starts with leading self, influencing others, and staying steady in a complex world.

LEAD. SERVE. IMPACT.

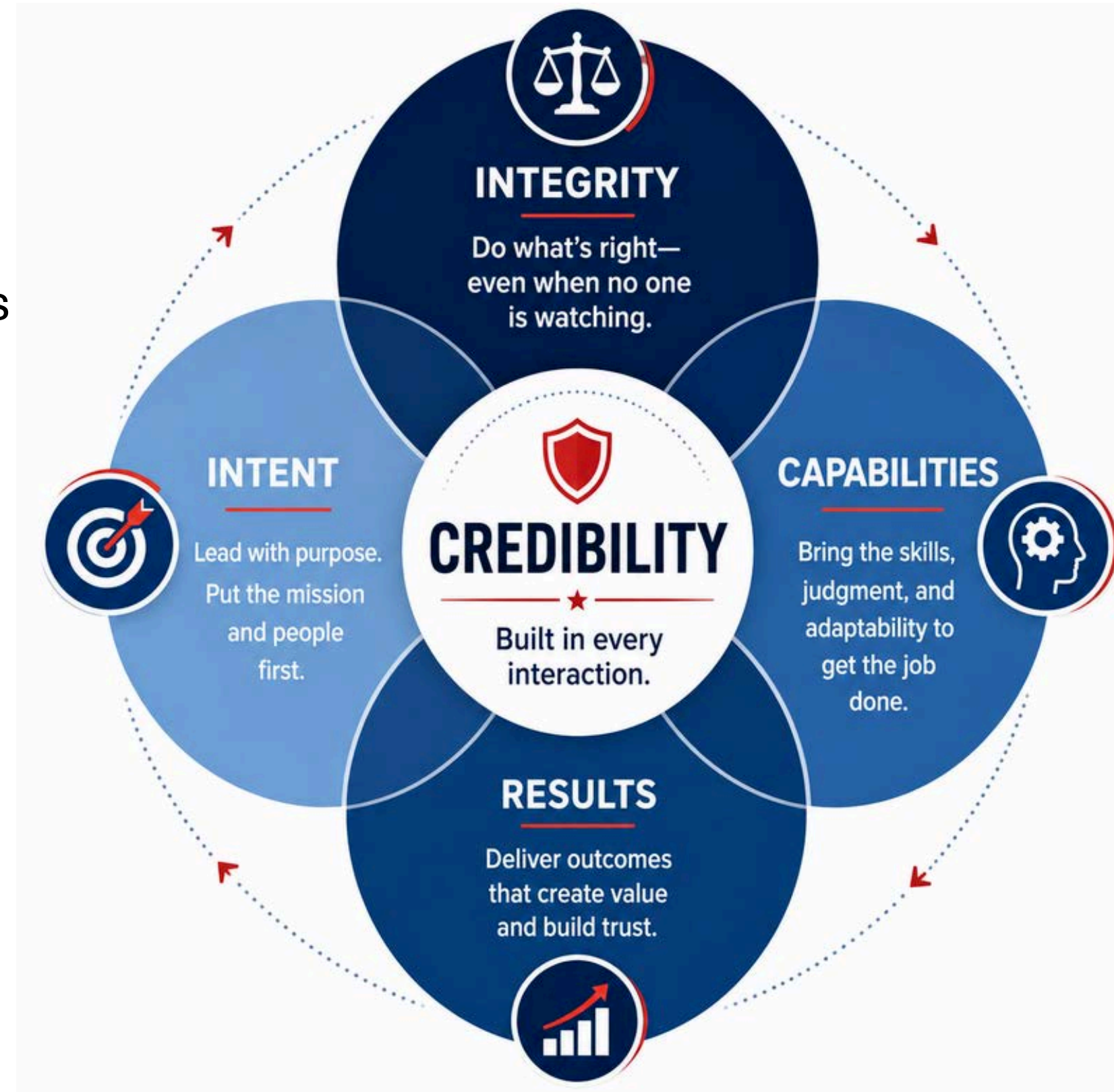




“Part of building trust is **understanding – clarifying** – what the **organization wants** and **what you can offer** them. *Be the one that does that best.* Then add to your credibility the ***kind of behavior that builds trust***. Next, take it **beyond just you** as the leader and **extend** it to your entire organization. The combination of that type of credibility and behavior and ***organizational alignment results*** in a culture of high trust.” - **Stephen Covey**

Covey's Core Four for Credibility

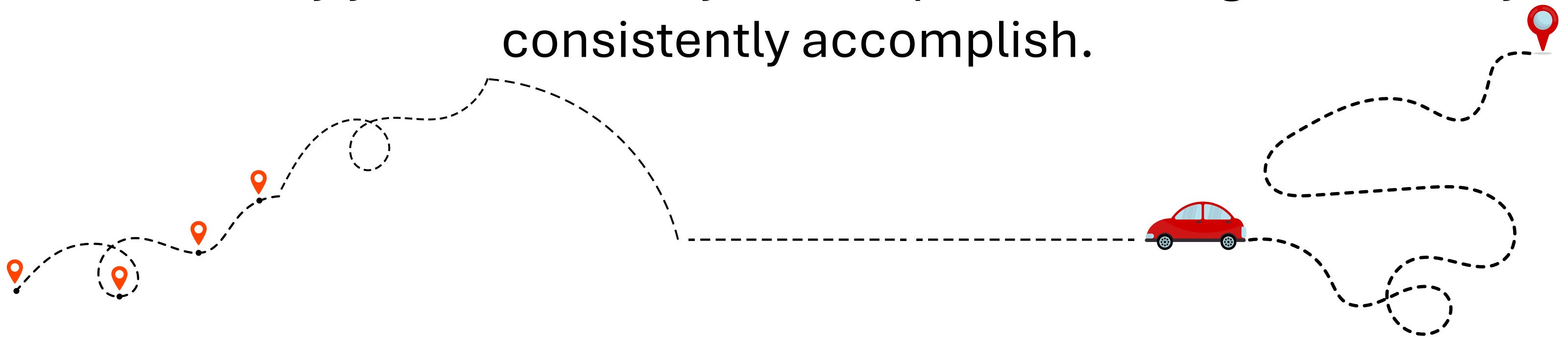
- **Integrity** - Consistency between values and actions creates trust.
- **Intent** - People are more likely to trust your decisions when they believe your motives are grounded in the mission rather than personal gain.
- **Capabilities** - Bring the knowledge, judgment, emotional intelligence, and adaptability needed to navigate complexity with confidence.
- **Results** - Deliver meaningful outcomes. Credibility grows when promises become actions and actions produce lasting impact.



The Core Four in Motion

These four elements don't exist independently. They reinforce one another.

Someone may have **tremendous expertise**, but **without integrity**, their **credibility suffers**. Likewise, someone with **excellent intentions** who **cannot execute** will **struggle to earn confidence**. Lasting credibility comes from the alignment of all four: people trust what you stand for, why you do it, what you're capable of doing, and what you consistently accomplish.



The Bank of Credibility

The Credibility Bank Account

Every interaction is either
A Deposit or **A Withdrawal**

Deposits

- Keeping promises
- Being prepared
- Admitting mistakes
- Following through
- Showing respect
- Being visible



Withdrawals

- Defensiveness
- Surprises
- Mixed messages
- Silence
- Blame
- Overpromising



Make Deposits Consistently

Make Daily Deposits

- **Keep your promises** - Do what you said you would do.
- **Be prepared** - Preparation demonstrates respect for others' time.
- **Own your mistakes** - Accountability strengthens trust more than perfection.
- **Follow through** - Reliability creates confidence.
- **Treat everyone with respect** - Every interaction matters.
- **Be visible and accessible** - Trust grows through presence and consistency.



Make Withdrawals Sparingly

Avoid Unnecessary Withdrawals

- Defensiveness instead of curiosity
- Unexpected surprises instead of proactive communication
- Mixed messages instead of clarity
- Silence when communication is needed
- Blaming others instead of taking ownership
- Overpromising and underdelivering



Leading Through It

**Leadership isn't reducing
complexity.
It's helping other people move
confidently through it.**



Leading in the Gray

Modern leaders rarely choose between **Right and Wrong**.

Instead they navigate

Right vs Right

Speed vs Accuracy

Policy vs Compassion

Urgent vs Important

**Transparency
vs Confidentiality**

Loyalty vs Accountability

This is where credibility is earned.



Communication During Uncertainty

When you cannot tell people everything

Try saying:

- Here's what we know.
- Here's what we don't know.
- Here's what we're doing.
- Here's when you'll hear from us again.

That final sentence dramatically increases trust.





Transparency $\neq$ Total Disclosure

Transparency IS

Honest
Timely
Respectful
Clear
Appropriate

Transparency IS NOT

Sharing everything
Breaking confidentiality
Speculating
Gossiping
Overexplaining



The Neutral Convener Mindset

Before Every Difficult Conversation, Ask Yourself...

Am I creating clarity or confusion?

Am I lowering the temperature or raising it?

Am I helping people understand one another?

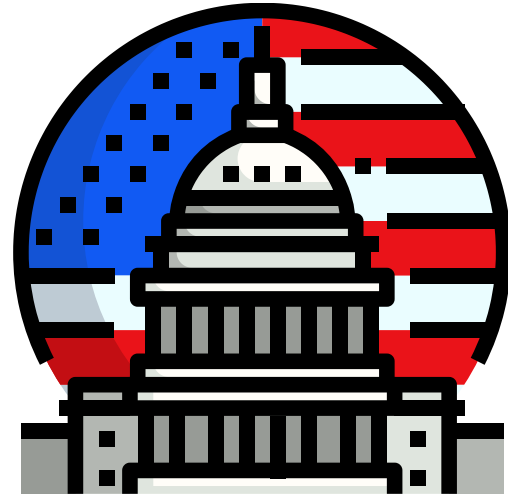
Am I protecting the credibility of the institution?

What outcome best serves the public, not my preferences?



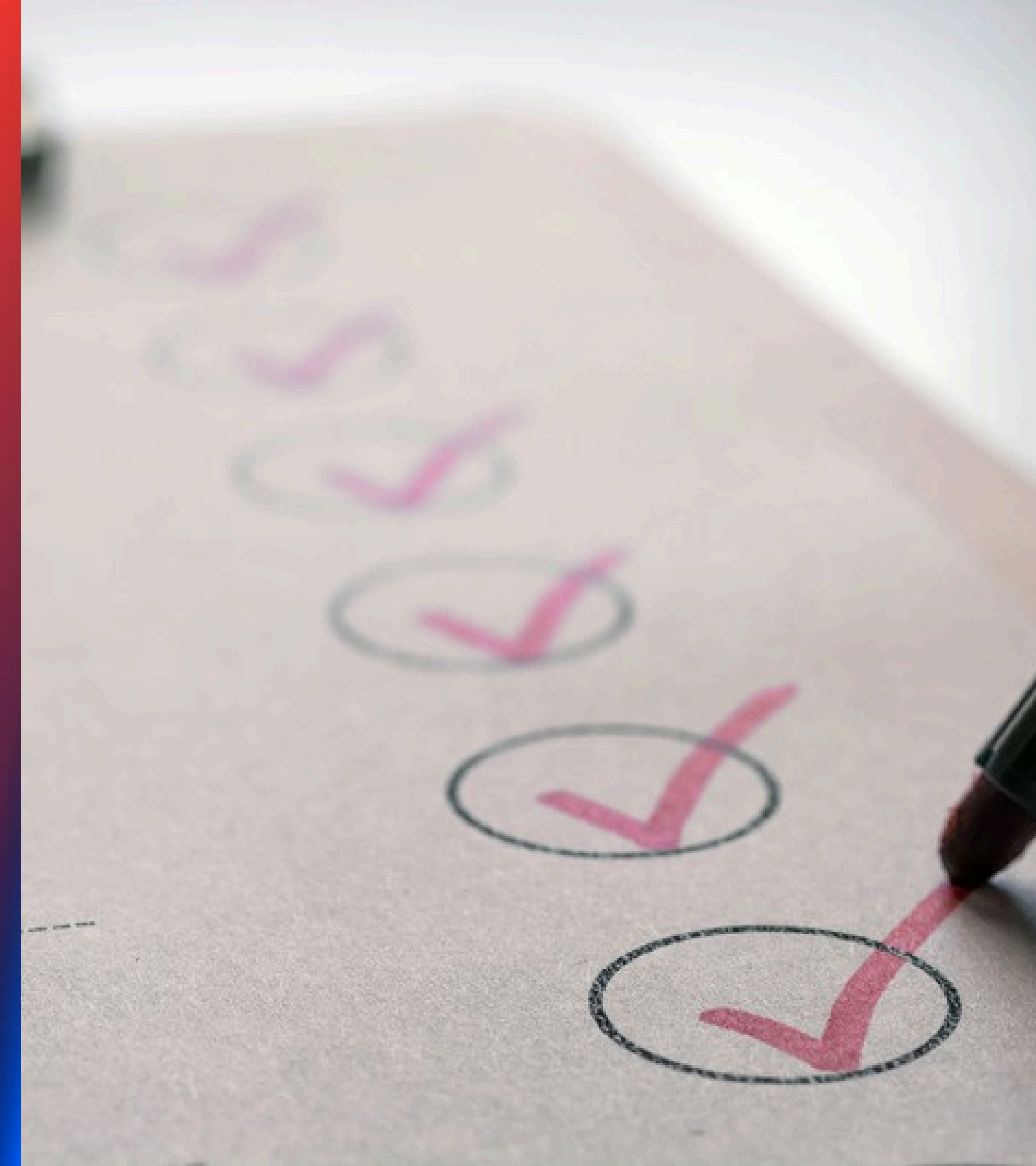
***A neutral convener doesn't stand in the middle because they lack conviction.
They stand in the middle because they are committed to fairness, professionalism, and
preserving the conditions for productive dialogue.***





**Public trust is not built by institutions alone.
It is built by people of integrity who choose,
every day, to serve with professionalism,
humility, and credibility.**





Commitment to Action

What is something you will do
or try because of what you
learned today?
and/or

What skill will you use right away?

PUBLIC

SERVICE

LEADERSHIP

INSTITUTE®



ourpublicservice.org

partnershipforpublicservice



publicservice

rpublicservice

Partnership for Public Service



PartnershipforPublicService



PARTNERSHIP
FOR PUBLIC SERVICE