

From Community Need to Sustainable Impact

Building and Sustaining Mission-Driven Initiatives

Victoria Ayodele, Laidlaw Scholars Program, Duke University

In partnership with CareSOS (ServiceNow) and the Ron Brown Scholars Program Development Institute



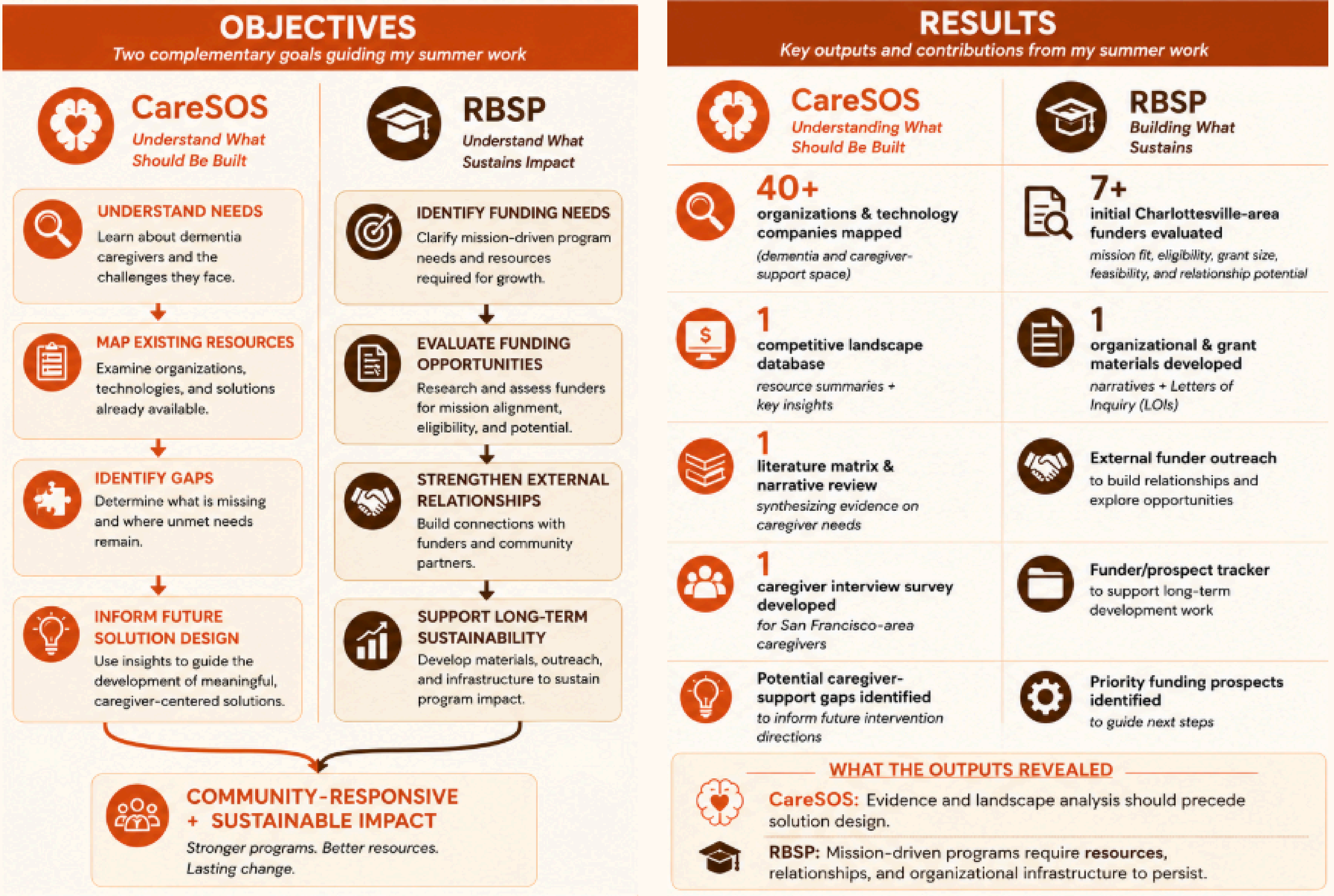
How can leaders translate an unmet community need into an effective initiative and build the infrastructure necessary for that work to last?

Introduction

The **Ron Brown Scholar Program (RBSP)** is a national nonprofit that supports Black students through a signature \$40,000 scholarship, mentorship, leadership development, and college-access programming. My connection to RBSP began in high school as a former student mentee.



My second sustained summer experience was with **CareSOS**, an emerging dementia and elder-care initiative focused on supporting adult children and informal caregivers. Under the mentorship of Eleanor Branch at ServiceNow, I examined the existing caregiver-support landscape to better understand what resources are available, where gaps remain, and what to consider before developing a new solution.



My Summer at a Glance

CareSOS · Caregiver Research: What should be built?
RBSP · Nonprofit Development: What allows it to last?

My Background

I entered the summer focused on implementing an idea. As my work evolved, my question broadened: **understanding what communities need, determining what should actually be built, and creating the relationships, evidence, and resources that allow promising work to survive.**

Leadership Lessons

- **Mission alignment is necessary, but not sufficient.** Good ideas also depend on eligibility, feasibility, timing, relationships, and resources.
- **Research can be part of implementation, not merely preparation for it.** Understanding what already exists can prevent the creation of another solution that cannot address the actual gap.
- **Adaptability and persistence are not opposites.** Leadership can mean remaining committed to the purpose while changing the path used to reach it.

Future Steps

- **CareSOS:** Continue examining the caregiver-support landscape and identified gaps to inform potential future development of caregiver-centered resources.
- **RBSP:** Continue grant prospect development, funding materials, and prospective submissions to support educational pathway programming.

Acknowledgements:

I appreciate the support of Eleanor Branch and Michelle Packer in the development of my Leadership-in-Practice. I also acknowledge the advisory support of the Laidlaw Scholars Program.