



**Indigenous Nation-Building:
Issues of Self-Rule, Institution-Building, and Leadership**

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Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy

Some Stories



Native Nations Institute for Leadership, Management, and Policy

Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians

Meadow Lake Tribal Council

Citizen Band of Potawatomi Nation

Membertou First Nation

Cochiti Pueblo



The Puzzle

What explains the success that some Native nations in the US have had in building sustainable, self-determined economies?



What the research says...

Research carried out by the Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona and the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development indicates that the keys to successful, sustainable development lie in *how Native nations govern themselves*. The economic development challenge is first and foremost a political challenge.



Keys to Success

- Practical Self-Rule (Jurisdiction)
- Effective Institutions of Self-Governance
- Cultural Match
- Strategic Orientation
- Leadership

in other words... Nation-Building



NATION BUILDING

Definition:

The enhanced capacity of Indigenous nations to realize their own economic, educational, cultural, environmental, and political objectives through foundational actions of their own design.



Today, What Does Self-Rule Mean for Indigenous Governments?

Control of Cultural and Religious Affairs

Use of Environmental and Natural Resources

Business Permitting and Regulation

Setting Citizenship/Membership Criteria

Law Making and Legislation

Governmental Form

Taxation

Civil Law and Courts

Criminal Law and Courts

Postal Service

Issuance of Currency

Military



THE EBB AND FLOW: A QUICK HISTORY OF U.S. FEDERAL INDIAN POLICY

Status	Chronology
International Treaties	c. 1776...
Law (and Military Expansion)	c. 1830...
Military Invasion	c. 1865...
Termination through Allotment	c. 1885...
Indian Reorganization Act of 1934	1934...
Termination through Derecognition	1953...
Self-Determination Policy	c. 1970...
Self-Governance/Self-Determination	c. 1988...



Despite the intense efforts to change Native peoples into other than who we are, we have, by and large, maintained our sense of peoplehood, culture, and relationships



Federal Policy: Termination or Self-Determination?

What is clear in the constant
vacillation of U.S. Federal Indian policy
is that the
policy of self-rule (jurisdiction)
is the only Federal policy that has worked in
Native affairs.



There seems to be a 20-year Lag Rule present, which requires patience and tolerance because Indigenous development solutions have been diverse and creative; rather than, the shoddy and easy answers that have often been put forth by the Federal government.



Another Story:

- **One Nation Split in Two By Two Colonizing Forces**
- **Self-Rule for One and Control for the Other**
- **Two Different Development Results**



Other Examples can be found in:

South Africa

Eastern Europe

Iraq

Afghanistan

New Zealand

Canada



The Puzzle

So, what explains the success that some Native nations in the US have had in building sustainable, self-determined economies?



Two Approaches to Indigenous Economic Development

- *The Standard Approach* dominated Indian Country through most of the 20th Century
- *The Nation-Building Approach* is emerging in practice in Indian Country today.

How do these approaches differ, and why does one work so much better than the other?



Building Native Nation Economies

...the old way



A new tribal administration is elected, promising to build a viable economy. The new leadership looks around and says,

“We sure do need to build an economy. What should we do?”

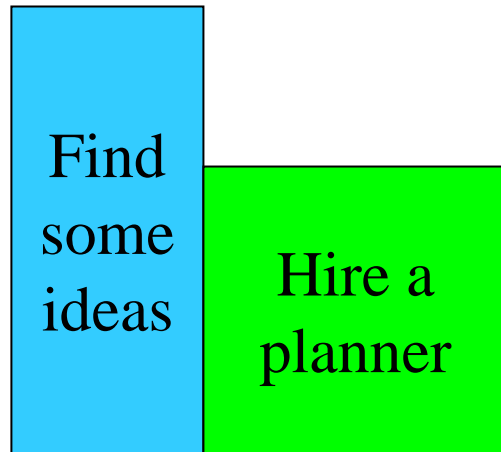


“Anybody got any ideas for some businesses?”

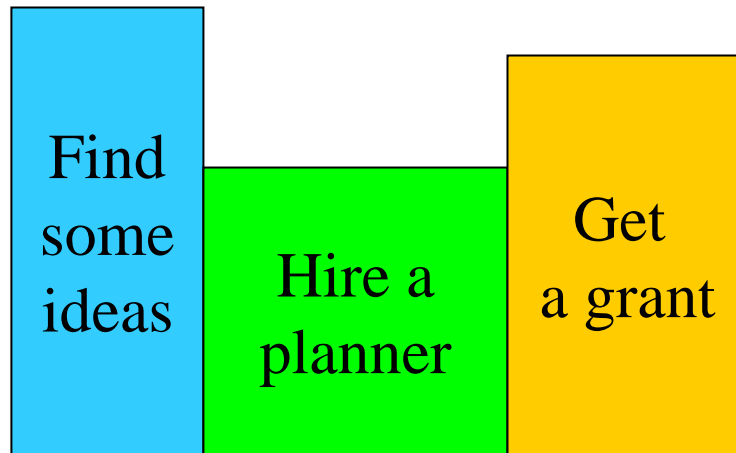
Find
some
ideas



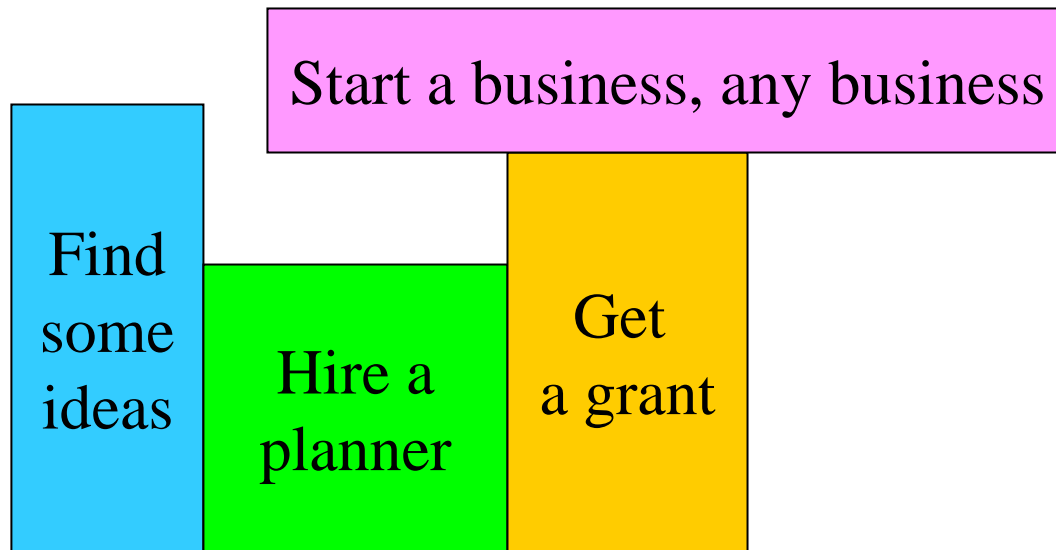
“We’d better have a planner”



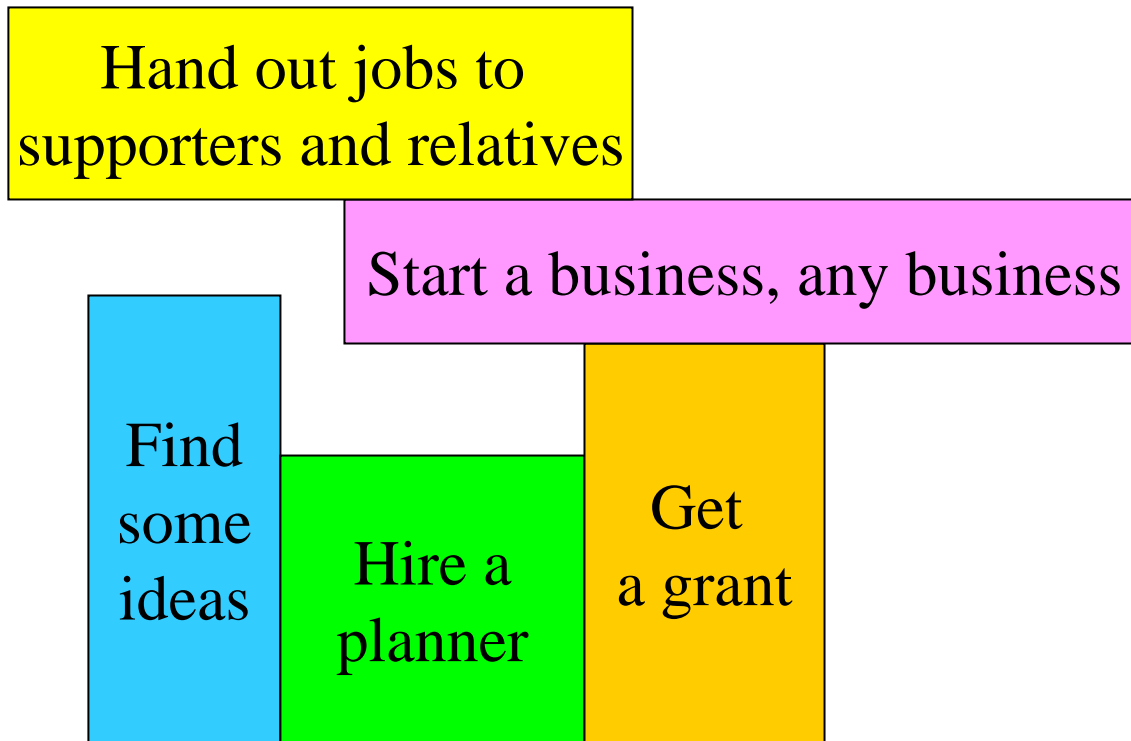
“Tell the planner to get some grants”



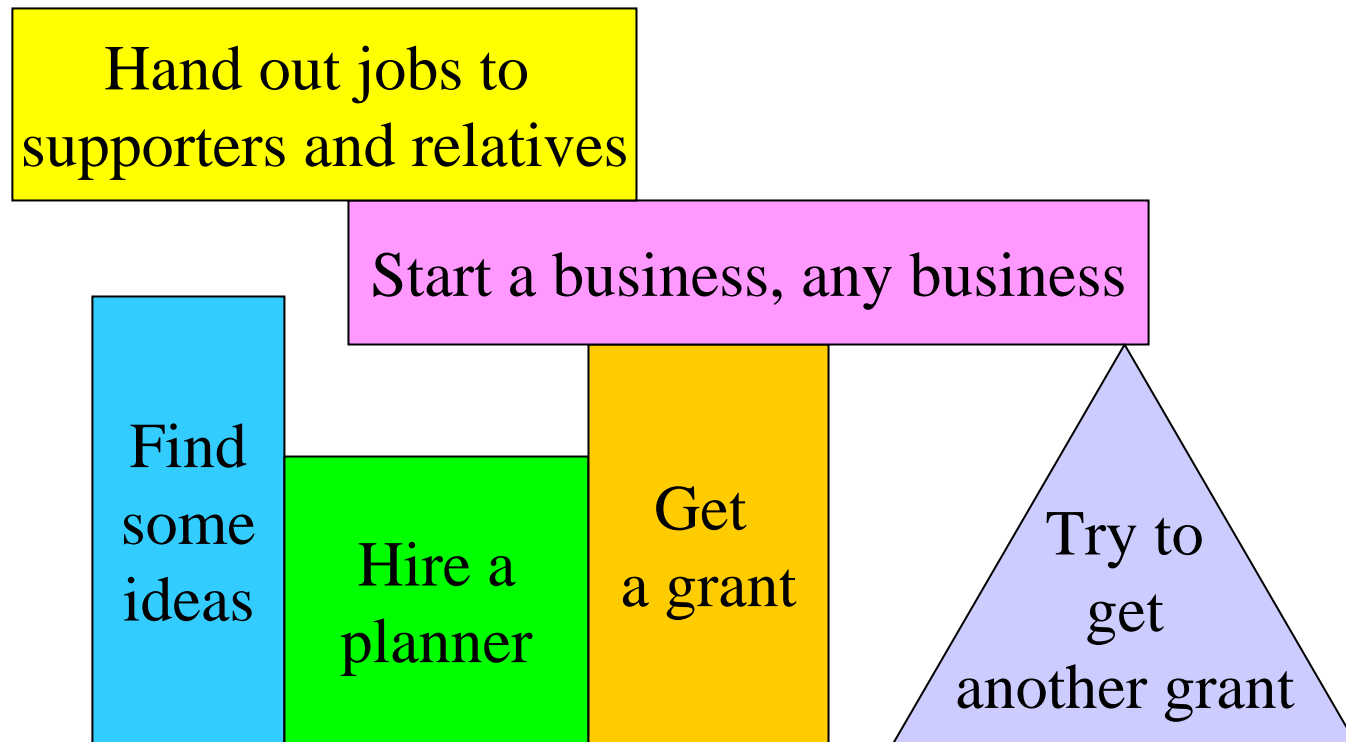
“Now get something going!”



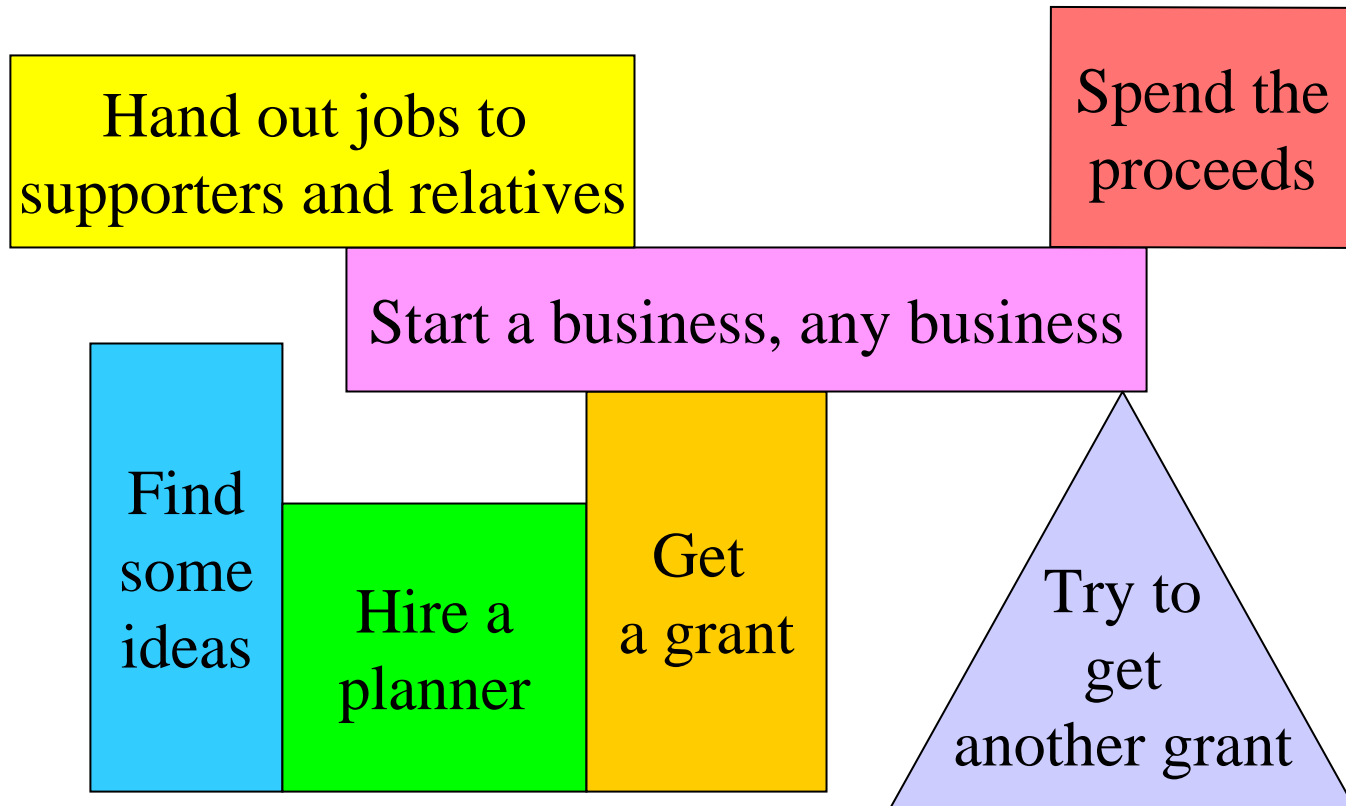
“Let’s get our political supporters to run it”



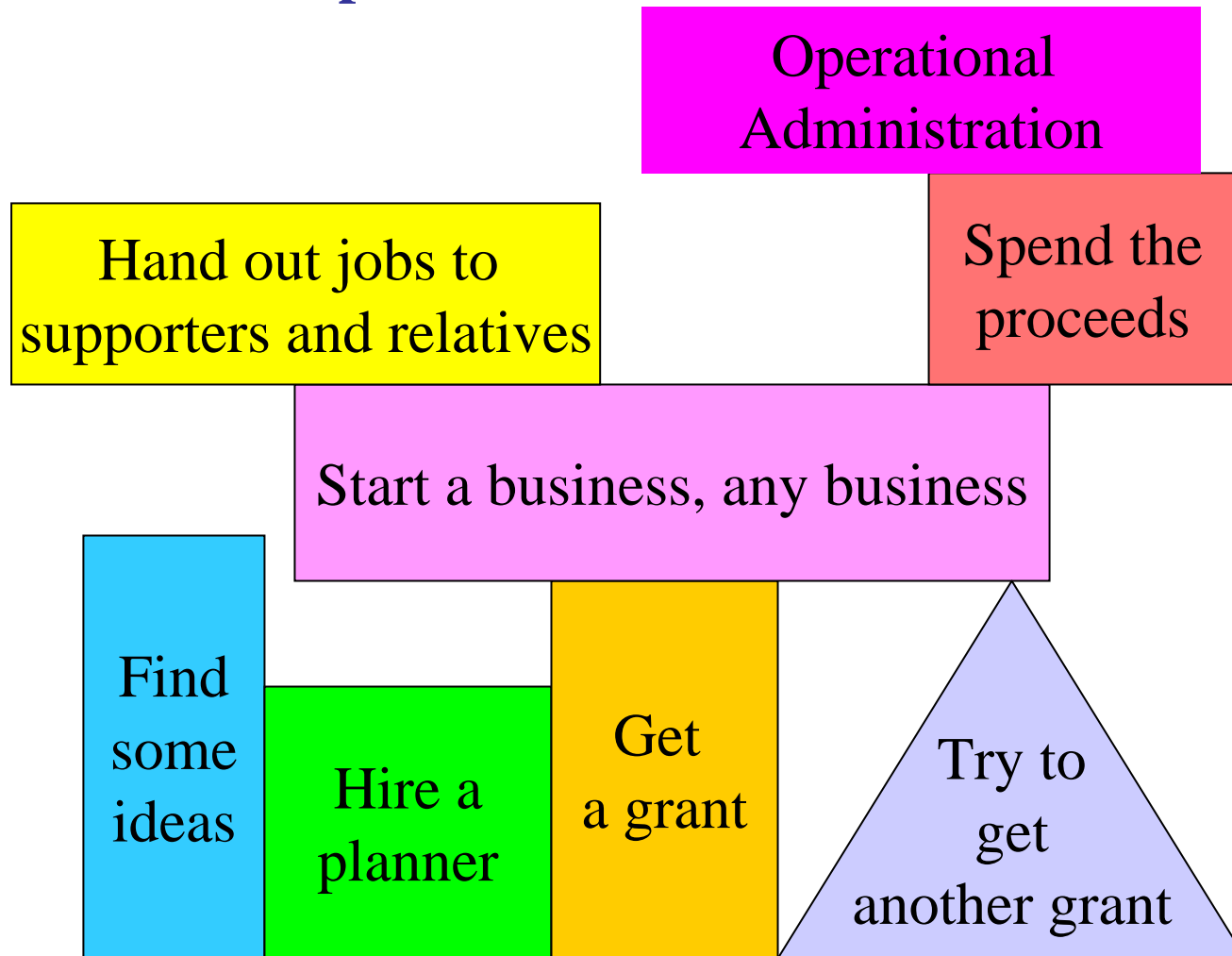
“If it’s not doing so well, find another grant to keep it going and get some more jobs”



“Spend the proceeds solving other problems”



“Be content with operational administration”



“If it starts to fail, run for cover...”

Operational Administration ?!!

Relatives are asking, where did the jobs go?

“Uh-oh!”

We're broke

Can we start another business?

We need a new idea

Fire the planner

Aren't there any more grants?

How About federal \$\$\$!

“Blame the manager!”

“Blame the Feds!”



At the next election, a new Council is elected, promising to build an economy. They look around and say,

“Those guys before us sure made a mess of things. Good thing we got elected. What should we do now?”

and here we go again...

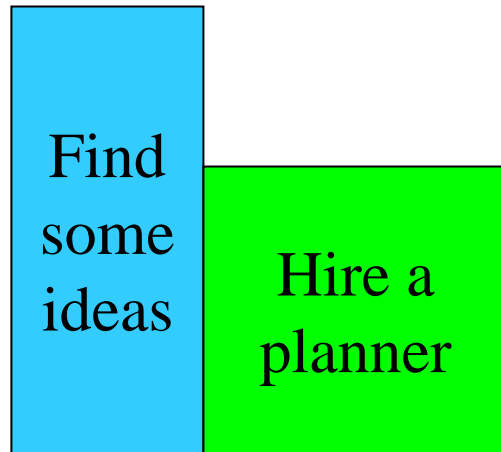


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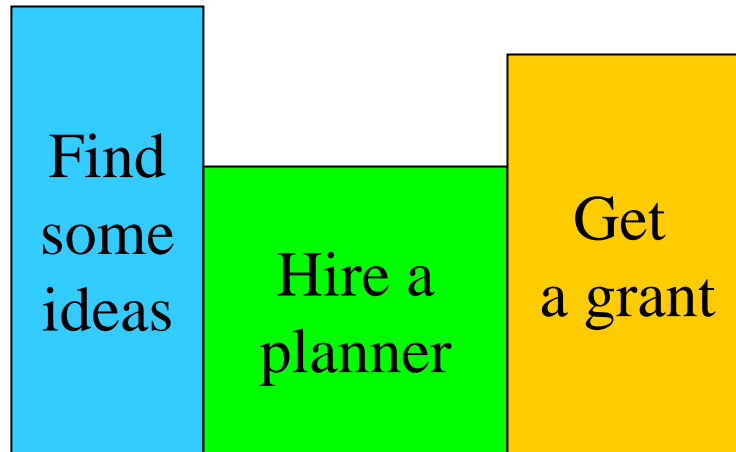
Find
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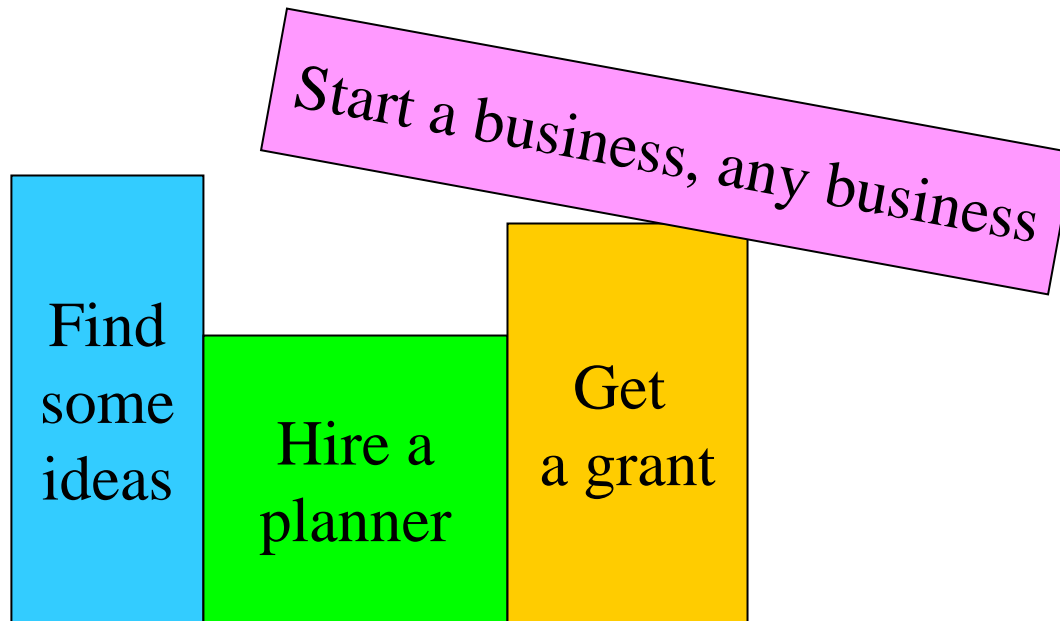
“We’d better have a planner”



“Tell the planner to get some grants”



“Now get something going!”



“Keep going with operational administration!”



The Standard Approach to Economic Development

1. Short-term, non-strategic
2. Views economic development as an economic problem
3. Instead of building an economy step-by-step, looks for “home runs.”
4. Lets others (usually other governments) set the development agenda
5. Views Indigenous cultures as obstacles to development



Typical Results of the Standard Model

- Failed enterprises
- A politics of spoils
- Brain drain
- Outside perceptions of incompetence and chaos that undermine the defense of sovereignty
- Inside perceptions of incompetence and chaos that undermine the confidence of the community
- Continuing poverty



In short, the standard approach produces a poor foundation for sustainable development...

**Sustainable
Development**

Government instability

Political interference in enterprise management

External controls

Short-term thinking

Home-run strategy



Isn't there a better way?

**Yes, and some Native Nations
are pursuing it...**



The Nation-Building Approach to Economic Development

1. **Sovereignty *in practice*** (the nation calls the shots)
2. **Capable governing institutions** (back up authority with competence)
3. **Cultural match** (governing institutions match community beliefs about how authority should be organized)
4. **Strategic orientation** (decisions are made with long-term priorities in mind)
5. **Public-spirited leadership** (instead of politics as boxing ring where factions fight to control the goodies)



1. Sovereignty *in Practice*

- Puts the development agenda and the necessary resources in Indian hands.
- Marries *decisions to consequences*, leading to better decisions.
- Has concrete, bottom-line payoffs.
- Evidence says it's necessary (but not sufficient) for sustained development.



What Does Self-Governance Mean?

Two Versions...

- **Operational Administration** – Native Nations take over administration of programs designed and funded by federal government and states.

Primary relationship = recipient

- **Self-Rule** – Native Nations have increased jurisdiction, constitutional authority, and decision-making power.

Primary relationship = partner



But what does this mean...?



A Focus on Government

Research shows that effective governing institutions are the essential components in sustainable economic development.

But why does the *quality of governance* matter so much?



2. Capable Governing Institutions

- Stability.
- Careful management of the politics-business connection.
- Effective and non-politicized resolution of disputes (a strong and *independent* judiciary).
- The ability to make binding decisions in a timely fashion.
- A bureaucracy that can get things done.



3. Cultural Match

- To be effective, governing institutions must have *legitimacy* with the people.
 - This means they have to *match* Indigenous ideas about how authority should be organized and exercised.
 - Institutions that match *contemporary* Indigenous cultures are more successful than those that don't.
 - Economic strategies that match *contemporary* Indigenous cultures are more successful than those that don't.
- ...But there's no blank check; institutions and strategies also have to *work*.**



Differences in Governmental Form

Traditional

Contemporary



Cochiti Pueblo
Onondaga

Hopi
Isleta Pueblo

Flathead
Citizen Potawatomi

- There is great variation in governmental form among Indigenous nations because of the diversity of traditional political systems and the uneven application of federal policy
- Combining traditional and contemporary is a common Indigenous strategy for solving governance challenges



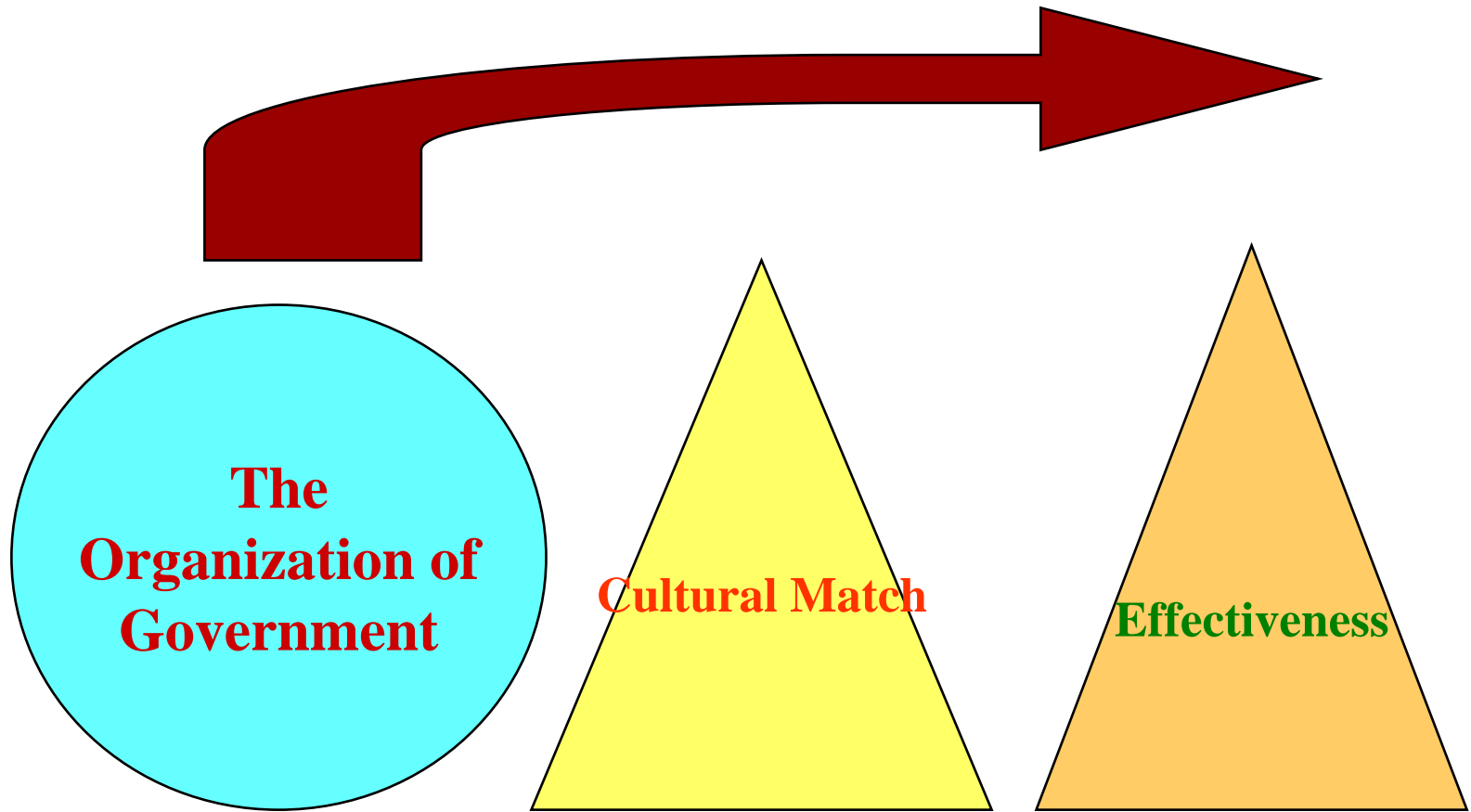
Which of these are the “best” governments?

- The ones that solve their nations’ governance challenges
- The ones that promote their communities’ interests
- The ones that hold their communities together
- The ones that match their communities’ cultures and *work* (meet the nations’ needs)

There’s no one, specific “best” way.



Whatever decisions you make, remember that the organization of government has to pass two tests:



4. Strategic Orientation: A Shift...

- ...from reactive to proactive thinking (*not just responding to crisis but trying to gain control over the future*)
- ...from short-term to long-term thinking (*twenty-five years from now, what kind of society do you want?*)
- ...from opportunistic to systemic thinking (*focusing not on what can be funded but on how each option fits the community's future*)
- ...from a narrow problem focus to a broader focus on the community (*fixing not just problems but communities*)



Key Strategic Questions

- What kind of society are you trying to build?
 - What do you hope will be different 25 or 50 years from now? What do you hope will be the same?
 - What do you wish to protect? What are you willing to change?
 - What assets do you have to work with?
 - What makes sense to the community at large?
- ...all in the context of a hard-nosed look at the reality and requirements of your situation.**



5. Leadership

...individuals or groups who are willing to break with *status quo* practices in Indian Country, who can articulate a new vision of the nation's future, and who both understand and can effectively encourage the foundational changes such visions require.



The Strategic Role of Leaders in Fostering Economic Activity

- They create (or destroy) a climate in which development can take place
- They set a vision (or not) of where the nation is headed.
- They create (or undermine) institutions capable of effectively implementing a national vision
- They respect (or abuse) rules of the game by which members must play
- They send messages that “investors” will (or will not) be treated fairly, regardless of who they voted for or who their relatives are
- They eliminate (or introduce) obstacles to development



LEADERSHIP

**What Legacy Will You Leave
for
Your Nation?**



The Role of Non-Indigenous Governments

The Nation-Building Approach

- Fund development *via* block grants (decisions about priorities move into Native hands)
- Invest in *institutional* capacity-building
- Transfer significant jurisdictional powers to Native Nations
- Abandon the “one-size-fits-all fantasy”: It won’t work
- Act like partners (be accountable to Native nations as well as higher-ups)
- Realize there will be mistakes, but what does self-rule mean if not the freedom to make mistakes and learn from them?



Implications for Native Nations

- Pursue *jurisdiction*, constitutional authority, decision-making power
- Development is first and foremost a *political* challenge
- Jurisdiction is toothless without *capable government* behind it
- Therefore, invest in *institutional* capacity building
- Act as a *partner*
- *Govern well*
- *Change the conversation* about government, about development, about what makes a healthy society



Building Native Nation Economies

...the Nation Building way means...

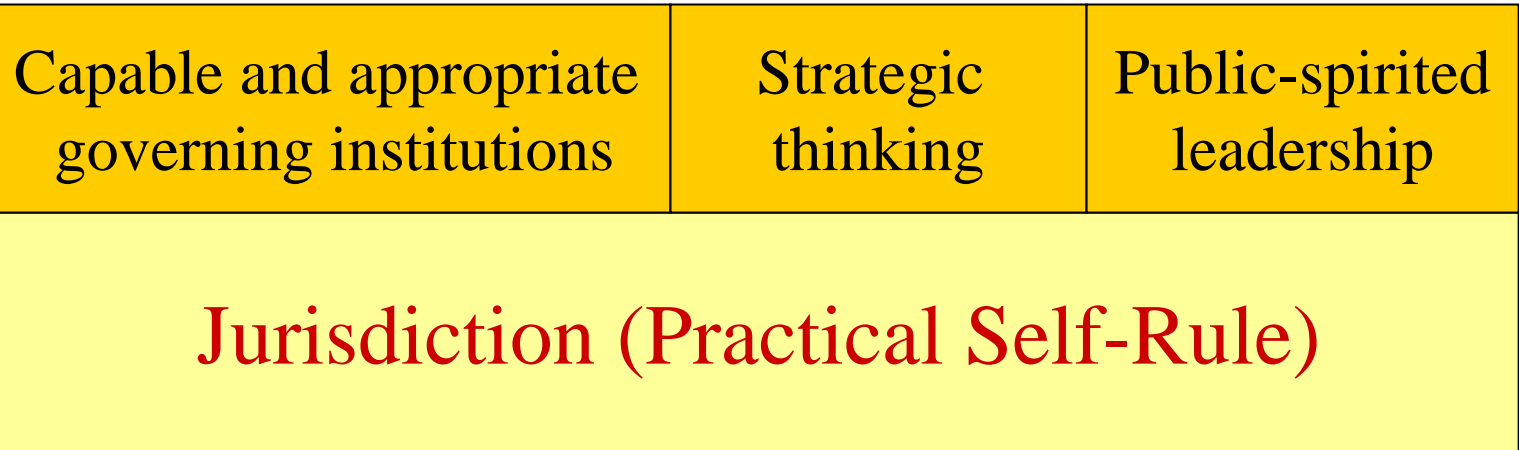
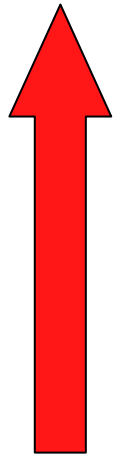


Building Native Nation Economies

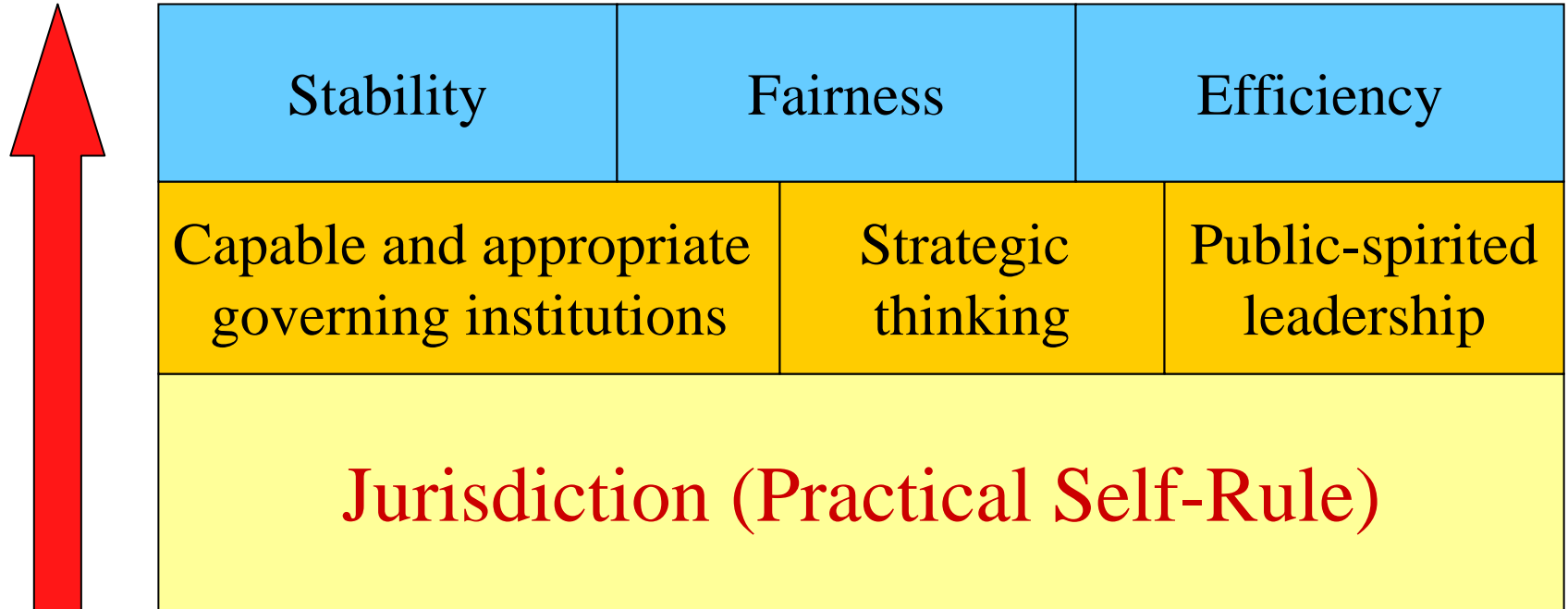
Jurisdiction (Practical Self-Rule)



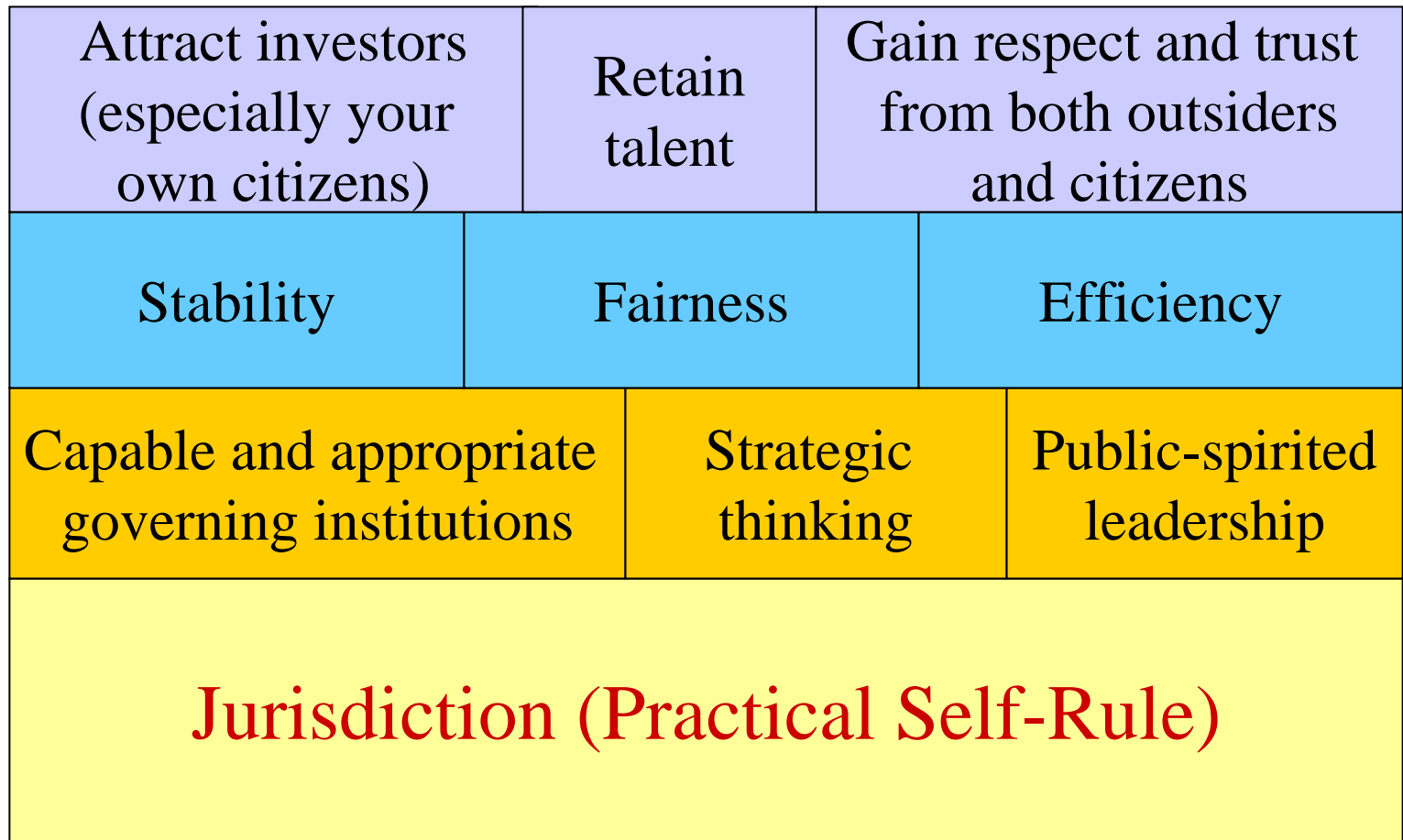
Building Native Nation Economies



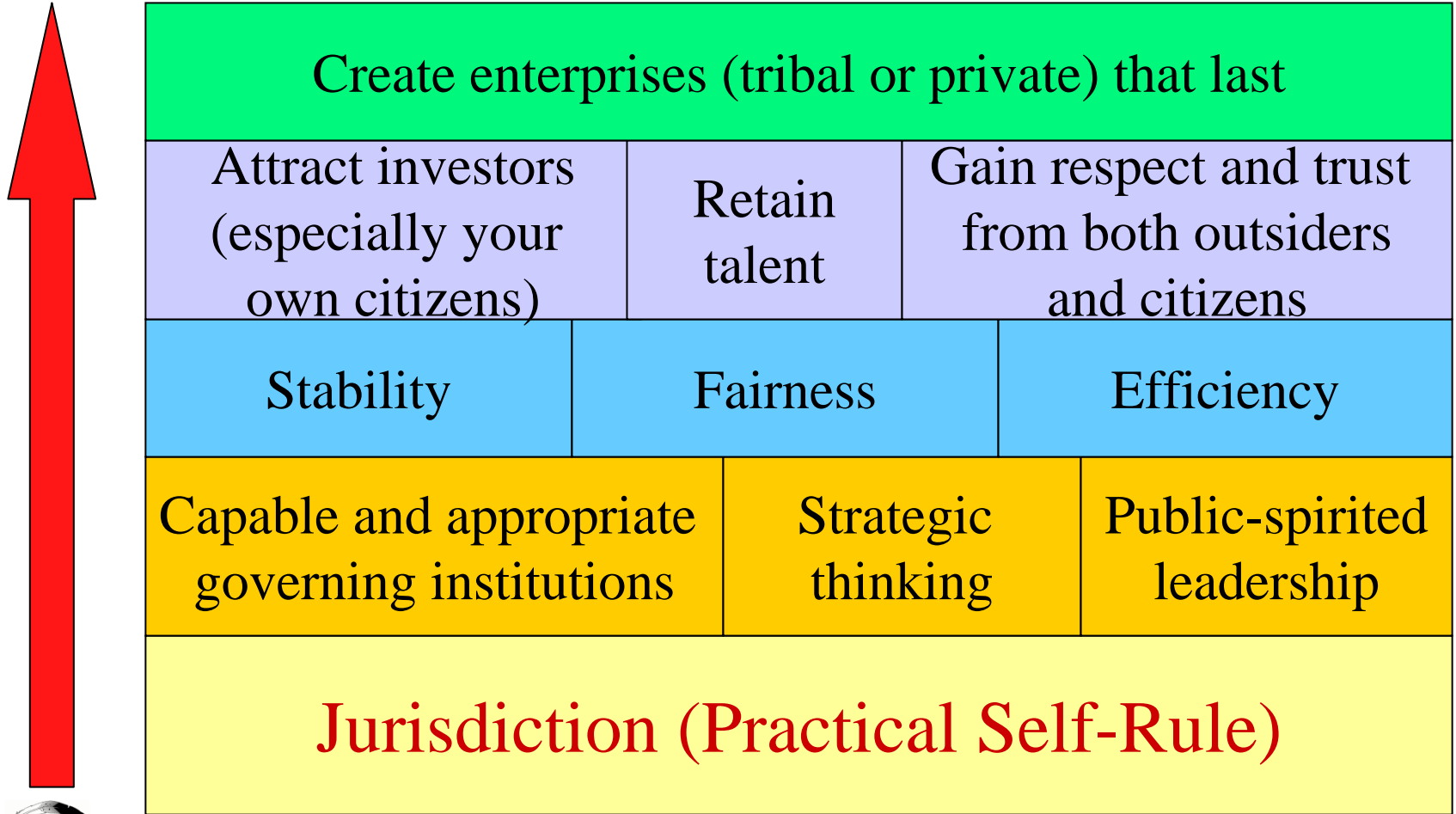
Building Native Nation Economies



Building Native Nation Economies



Building Native Nation Economies



Results of the Nation-Building Approach

- More effective access to and use of resources
- Increased chances of sustained and self-determined economic development
- A more effective defense of sovereignty
- *Communities* – not just economies – that *work*



None of the characteristics of the Nation-Building approach is something we usually describe as “economic”

They are all political

In the Nation-Building approach economic development is first and foremost a *political* problem

Once the political problem is solved, ***then*** economic assets begin to pay off



Nation-Building
is a
economic development
and
wealth generating strategy



KEYS TO NATION BUILDING IN NATIVE AMERICA

Successful Indigenous Nations
Assert the Right to Govern Themselves and
Exercise That Right Effectively
By **Building** Capable Governing Institutions
That **Match** Their Cultures.

Leadership and strategic thinking are keys.
The task is Nation Building.



Conclusion:

**Hold on to what is good,
Even if it is a handful of earth**

**Hold on to what you believe,
Even if it is only a tree by itself**

**Hold on to what you must do,
Even if it is a long way from here**

**Hold on to life,
Even if it is easier letting go**

**Hold on to my hand,
Even when I have gone away from you**

**Anselmo Valencia Tori
Pascua Yaqui Forefather**

