


FROM FRICTION TO FLOW

A Mini-Guide to Creating Purposeful Partner Experiences

 Learn more at studiobask.com

erin stevanus

Principal and Owner
studio b:ask



erin stevanus, principal and owner

studio b:ask brings a collaborative, strategic approach to org design — focusing on alignment, relationships, and long-term sustainability.

erin stevanus is a systems thinker and strategist with over a decade of experience helping public agencies, community-rooted organizations, and government teams navigate complexity, clarify roles, and design intentional ways of working.

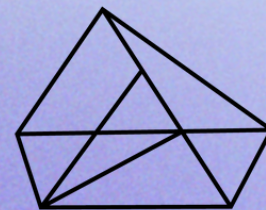
CONTEXT

The original session, "From Friction to Flow: Creating Purposeful Partner Experiences," was delivered at the SVPI Global Summit (May 2052) to help leaders in collective giving and venture philanthropy explore how intentional, equity-centered design can improve partner engagement.

Through journey phases, systems-based roles, and mapping tools, participants examined how to reduce friction and build momentum across their partner ecosystems.

This document is a quick-reference guide to help you spot friction in your partner journey — and shift toward trust, alignment, and flow.

WHAT IS A PARTNER JOURNEY?



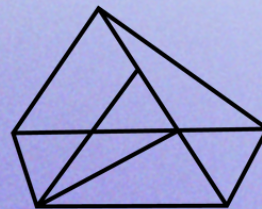
WHAT IS A PARTNER JOURNEY?

A partner journey is the foundation to your organization's relational infrastructure — not just a workflow.

It maps the full experience across key phases (e.g. from discovery to renewal), helping:

- Identify where trust breaks down (*friction*)
- Build alignment through intentional design (*flow*)
- Create shared ownership, not just deliverables

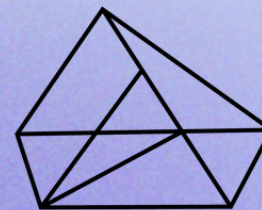
DESIGNING FOR FLOW



PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING FLOW

- **Equity-Centered Inquiry:** Continuously ask, "Who benefits? Who is harmed?" to guide just decision-making
- **Community Mapping:** Identify assets, gaps, and relationships that influence your partner ecosystem. This reveals where flow is blocked or overlooked.
- **Leverage Points for Systems Change:** Target small, strategic shifts in policy, practice, or power that create wider ripple effects
- **Co-Creation & Participatory Decision-Making:** Involve partners directly in shaping their experience. It builds ownership and shared investment.
- **Narrative Shifting:** Reframe assumptions: what's the dominant story of who gives, who decides, and who benefits? ***Change the story to change the system.***

ACTIVITY: SPOTTING FRICTION



PRINCIPLES FOR DESIGNING FLOW

- **Create a rough sketch of what your current state partner journey entails**
 - *Typical phases might include Discovery, Onboarding, Activation, and Growth, Transition/Renewal*
- **Examine the sketch and consider:**
 - *Where in the journey do we lose momentum, energy, or trust?*
 - *Where in the journey is there opportunity for more clarity?*
 - *What's “too much” or “not enough” in that moment?*
- **Get curious about how to increase flow in this phase of the journey. Brainstorm ideas that**
 - *How might we increase momentum, maintain energy, or (re)build/(re)gain trust in this moment?*
 - *How might we provide better clarity?*
 - *How might we decrease or increase _____ (fill in the blank)?*

Use these prompts or ideas that emerge in your next team huddle, design session, or 1:1 conversation. Share and validate your responses to see what resonates with your team – or better yet, a sample set of partners!

LET'S KEEP THE FLOW

studio b:ask works with leaders, teams, and networks to improve partner experiences through intentional design, systems thinking, and equity-centered strategies.

1:1 Coaching

- Focused, 60-minute coaching calls
- Identify friction points in your partner experience
- Leave with actionable shifts and strategic clarity

Workshops and Design Sessions

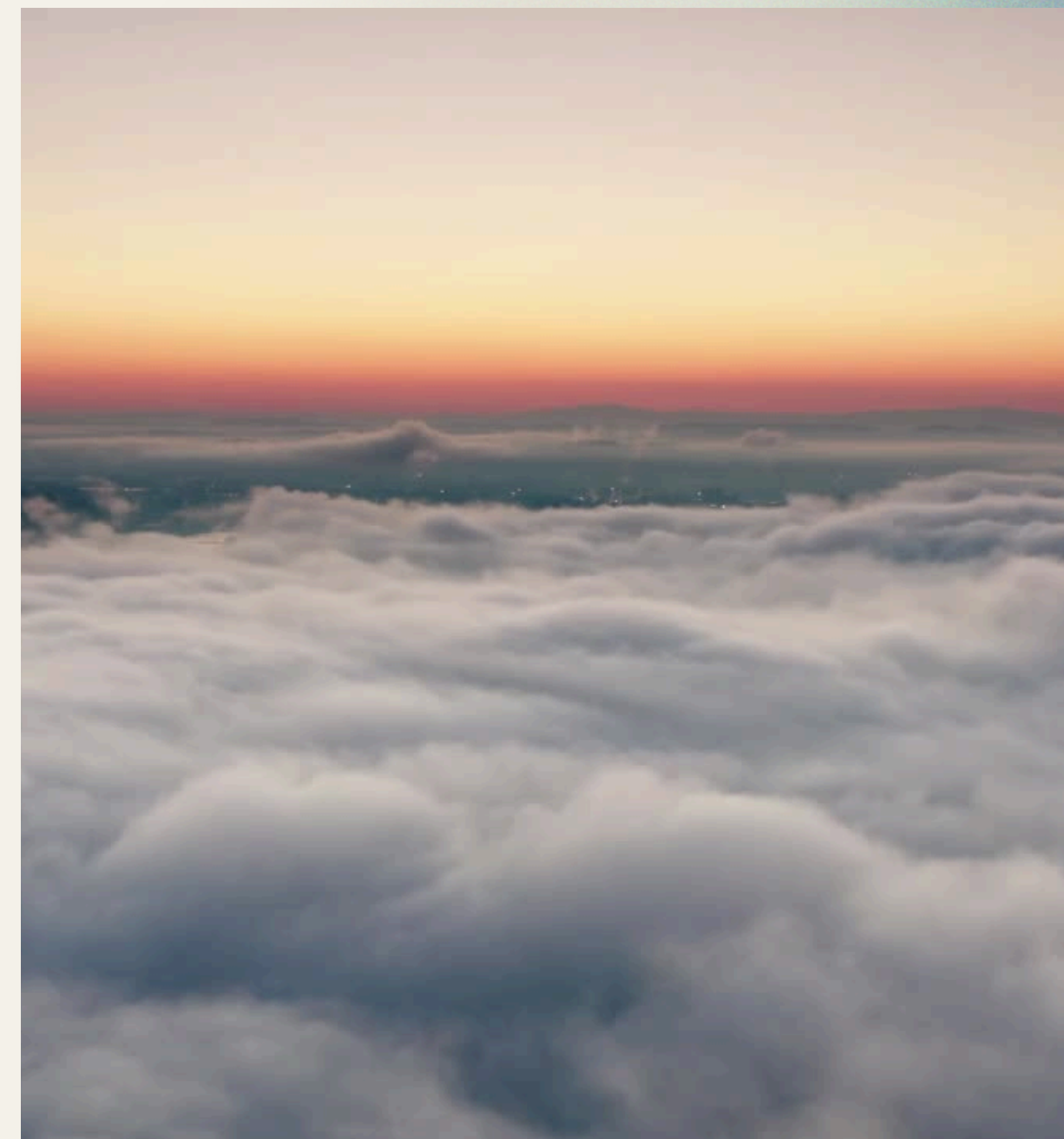
- Custom trainings for organizations and collaboratives
- Topics include journey mapping, systems roles, co-creation, and narrative shift
- Ideal for teams seeking practical frameworks and alignment

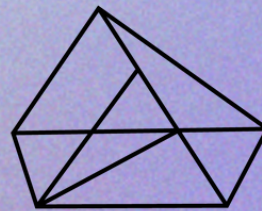
Team Coaching and Capacity Building

- Longer-term coaching to support internal culture shifts
- Build your team's capacity to lead with clarity, collaboration, and trust
- Grounded in creative, equity-centered practice

To connect or find out more:

studiobask.com | erin@studiobask.com





Learn more at studiobask.com