INNOVATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM

a human-centered approach to innovating in African higher education

UNITED STATES AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

GLOBAL CENTER FOR FOOD SYSTEMS INNOVATION

LILONGWE UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Meet **Andy**,
a Department head at a University in Africa.

Andy faces the ongoing demand of

RESOLVING PROBLEMS

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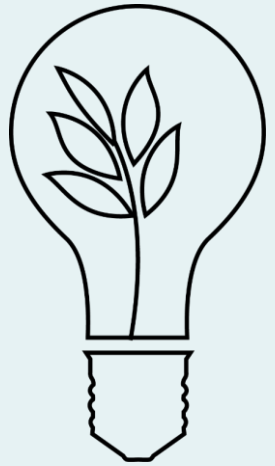


PRODUCING INNOVATIONS

to help his country prosper long term.

With each demand, Andy is met with a variety of:

PRESSURE & CONSTRAINTS

"I don't have the time to address community demand."

"I want to make change in this area but HR has limited capacity."

"What do my faculty need?"

"What are outside donors asking of me?"

"The guidelines of my university are limiting my ability to make real change."

"How will I achieve my professional and personal career goals?"

"What do my students need?"

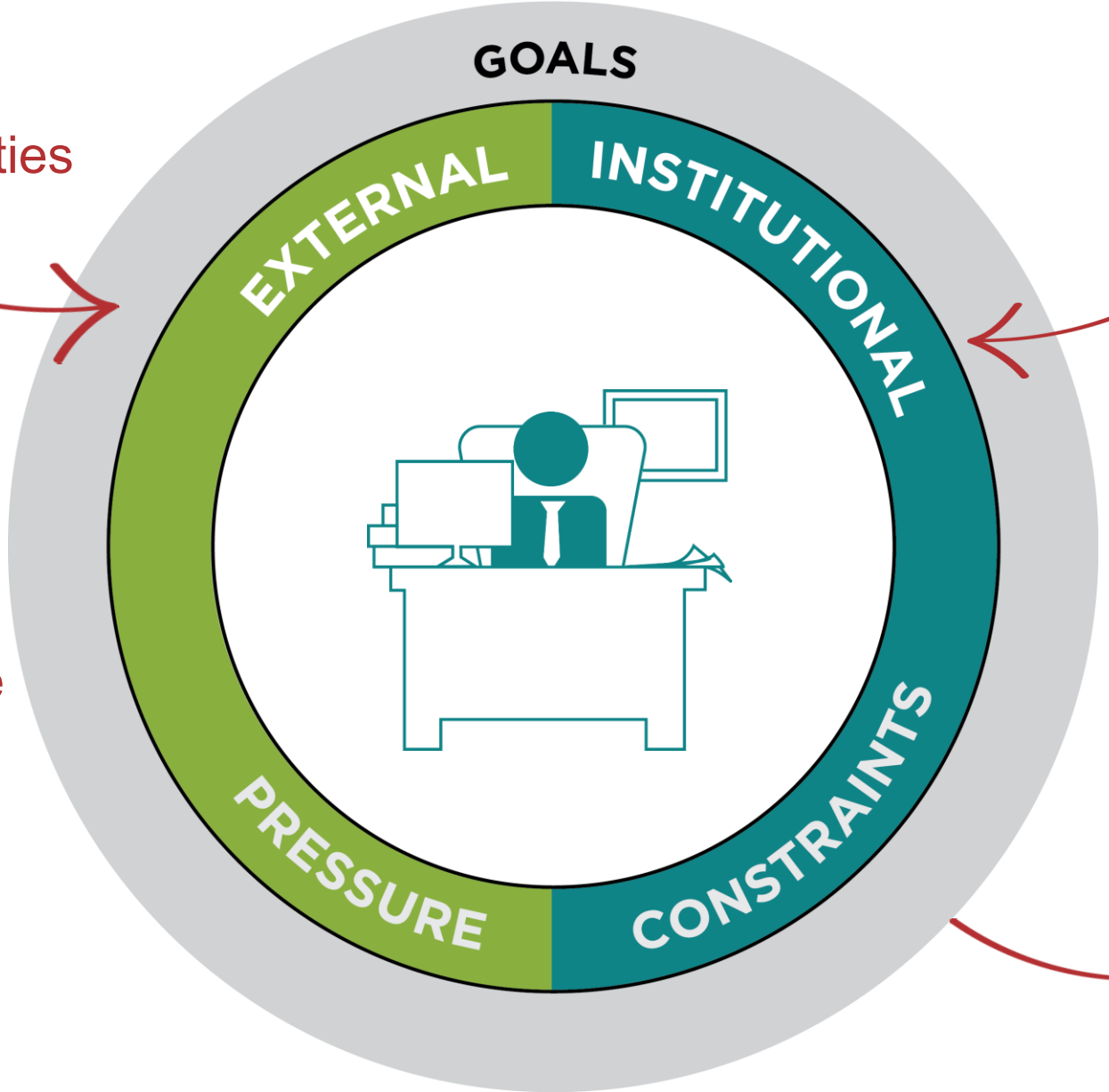
"High turnover in leadership positions makes it hard to sustain impact"

External pressures and institutional constraints direct Andy toward a career centered on the question:

In this higher education context:

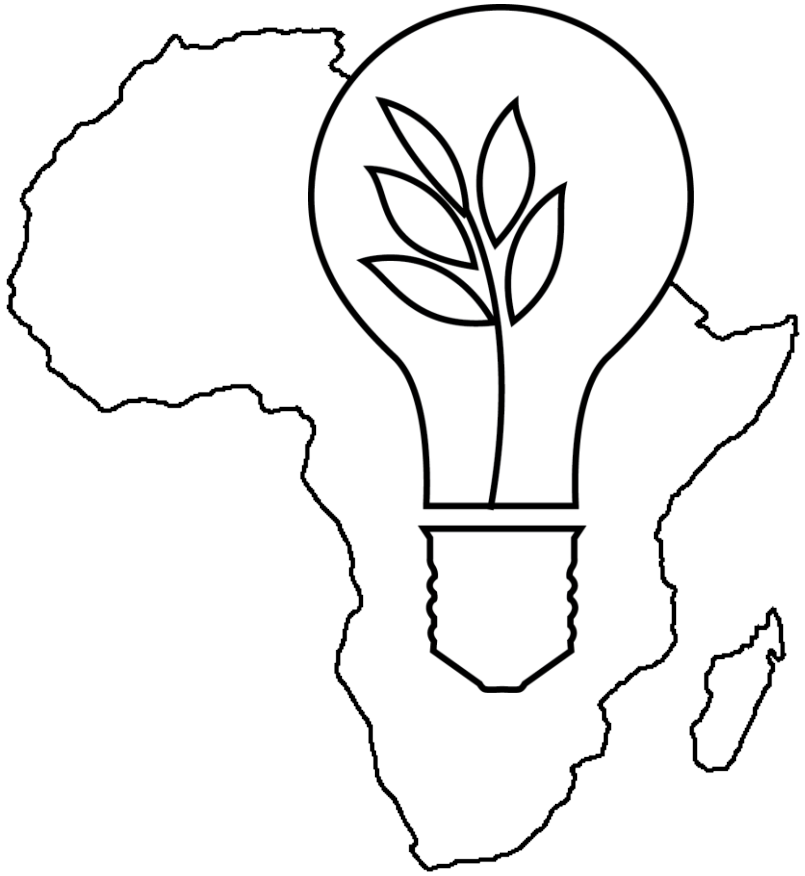
Pressure drives priorities

Constraints limit pathways



Andy becomes the center of the story

Andy is prevented from thinking about long term goals



As a result, few African communities access opportunity for transformative change.

What will it take to break this cycle?

How might we co-create long-term transformative change *with* and *for* people?

In 2016, the **Global Center for Food Systems Innovation**, a lab at Michigan State University, and **Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources,** a University in Malawi, set out to answer these questions.

THE PROBLEM:

Food Security in Africa

POPULATION

The world population is projected to reach 8.5 billion by 2030 and 9.7 billion in 2050.

ARABLE LAND

Worldwide arable land is projected to shrink to 585 million hectares by 2050.

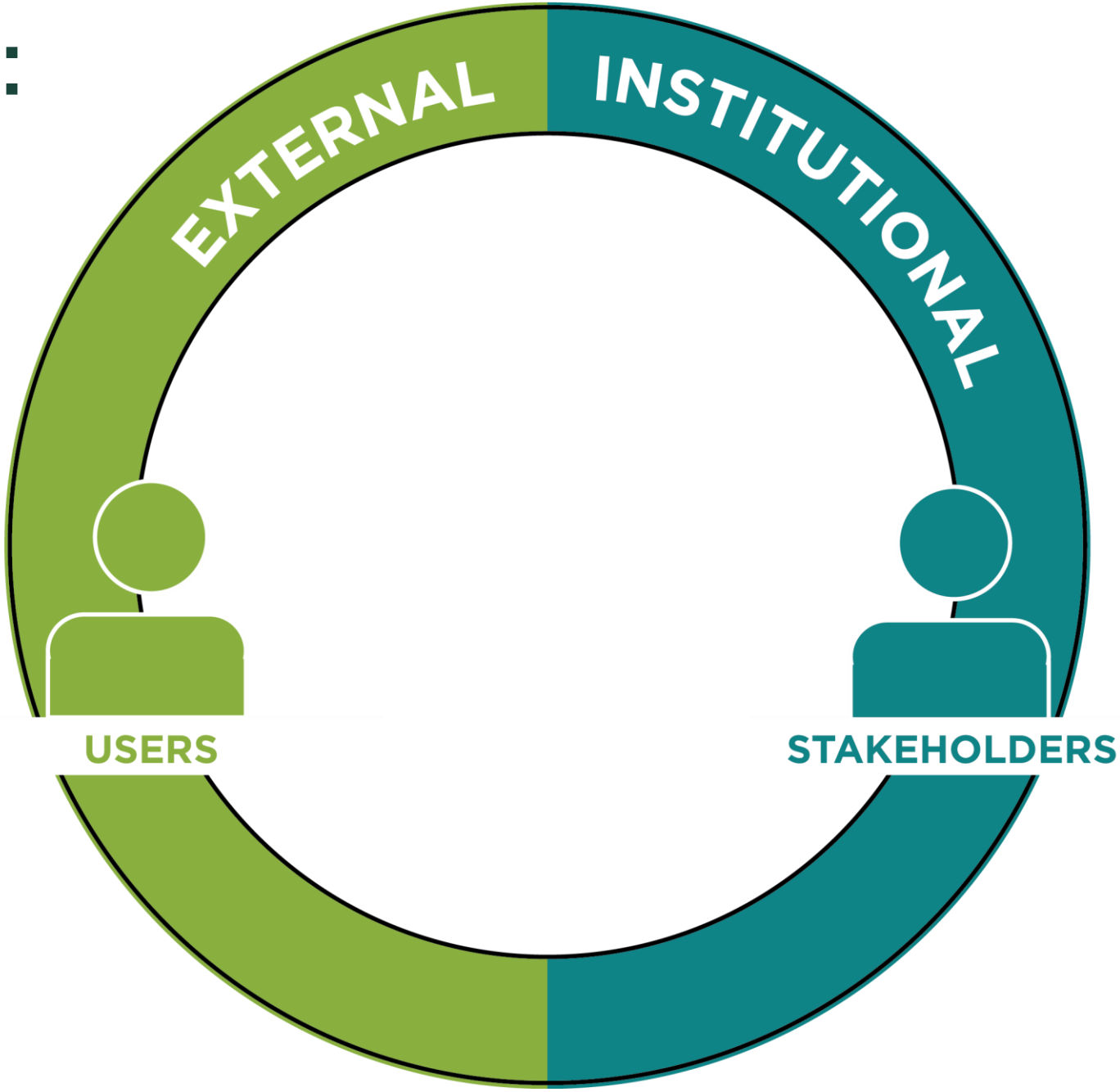
FOOD DEMAND

Global food demand in 2050 is expected to increase by at least 60%.

THE APPROACH:

People

If we want to break the cycle, we have to start with people *in* the cycle:



THE CHALLENGE:

Process

If we want to help Andy do things differently, we have to be willing to do things differently:

How do we actually do that?

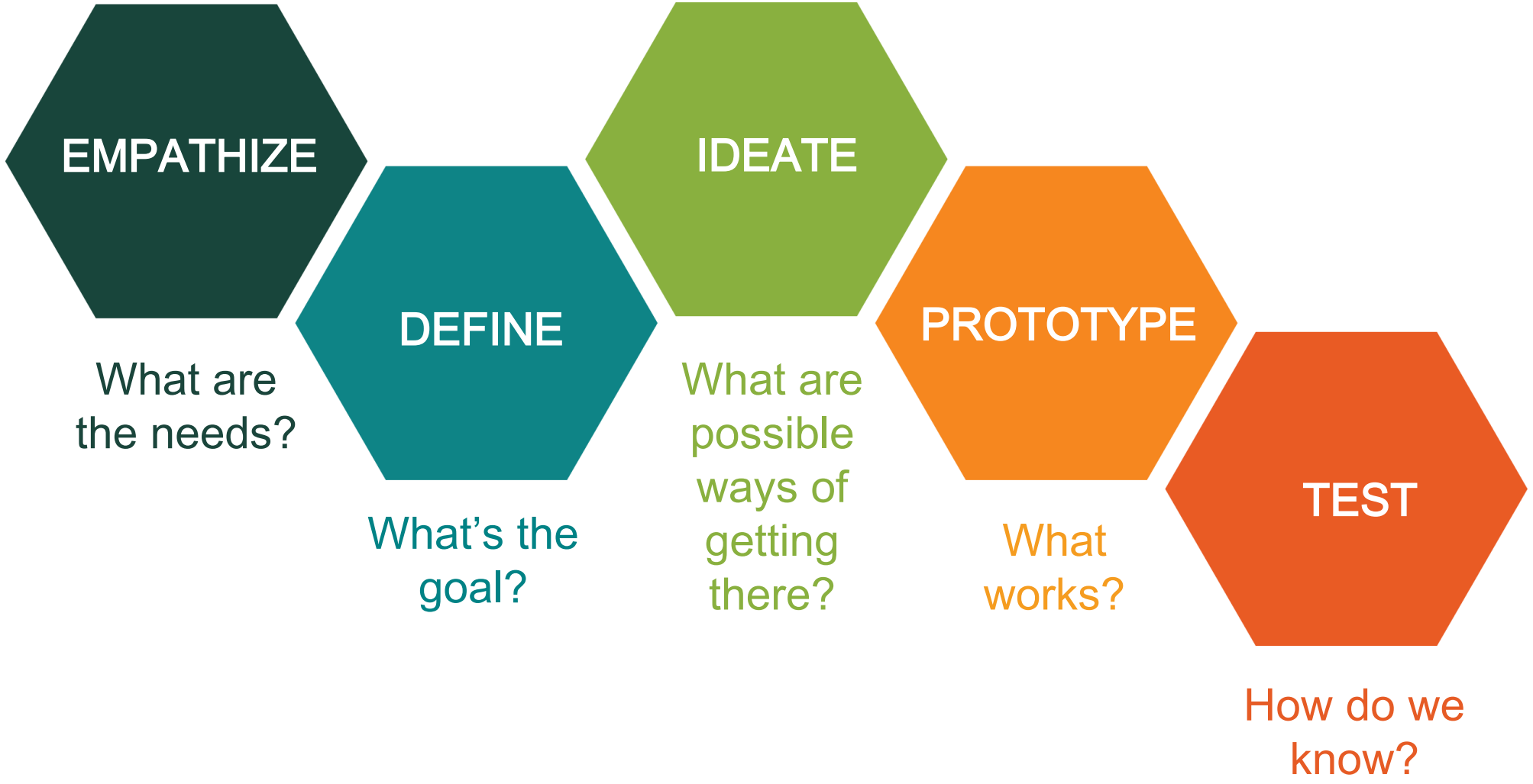
Start with the “what” not the how.

- **Human-centered**
  LUANAR faculty and MSU experts working together.
- **Measurable**
  Using evidence driven practices.
- **Adaptive**
  Committing to respond to LUANAR’s needs even as they change.

Say hello to Andy.

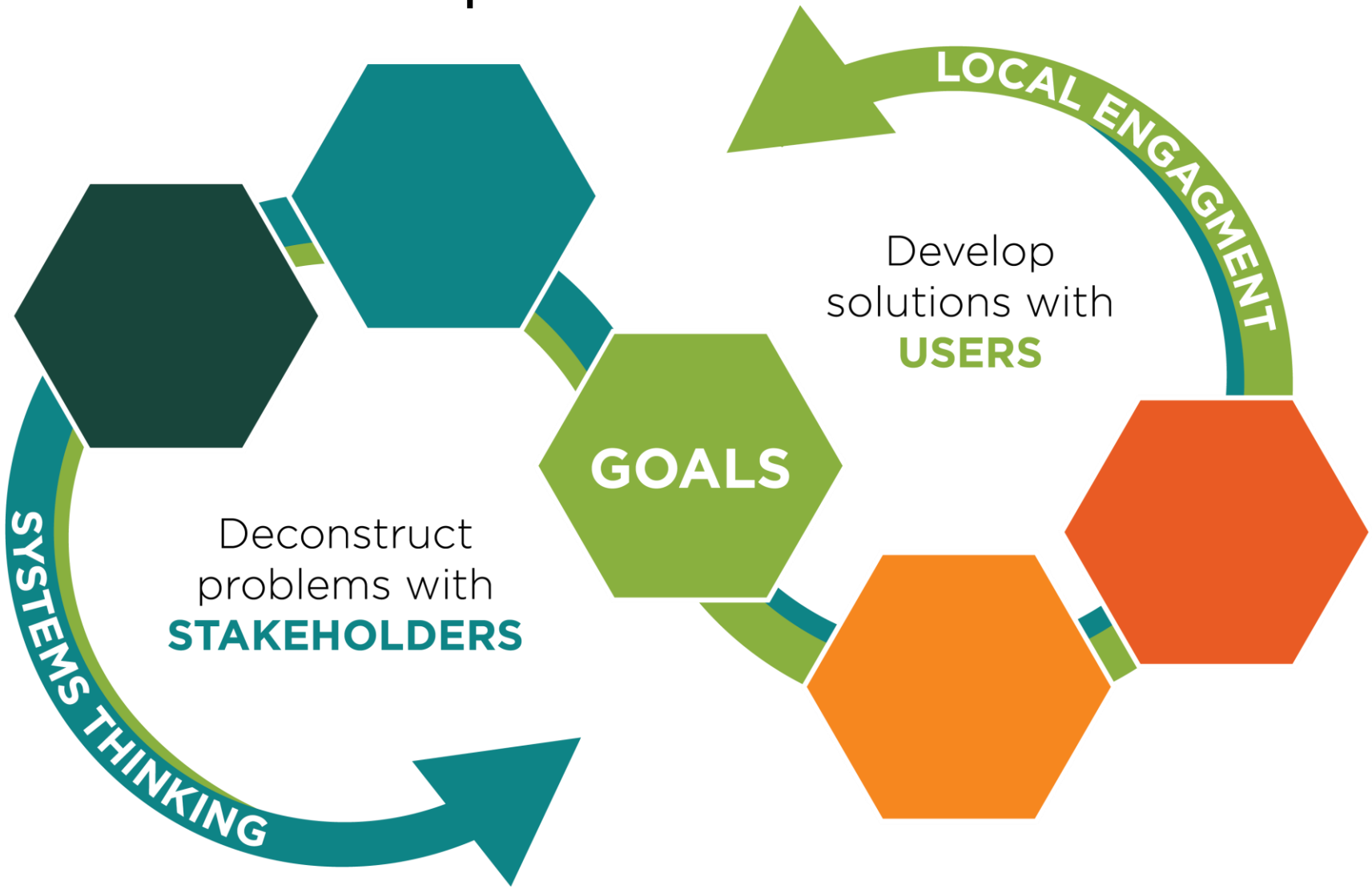
We didn’t tell him to be innovative, we gave him a path, a methodology and a means and space to practice.

THE METHODOLOGY:
Human-centered design



THE PATH:

Human-centered development



THE PRACTICE:

INNOVATION SCHOLARS PROGRAM

- 9 faculty and 8 university leaders
- 6 in-country workshops
- 15 months of applied learning and feedback

THE RESULT:

Users drive priorities

Institutions form pathways

Andy is compelled to consider long-term goals

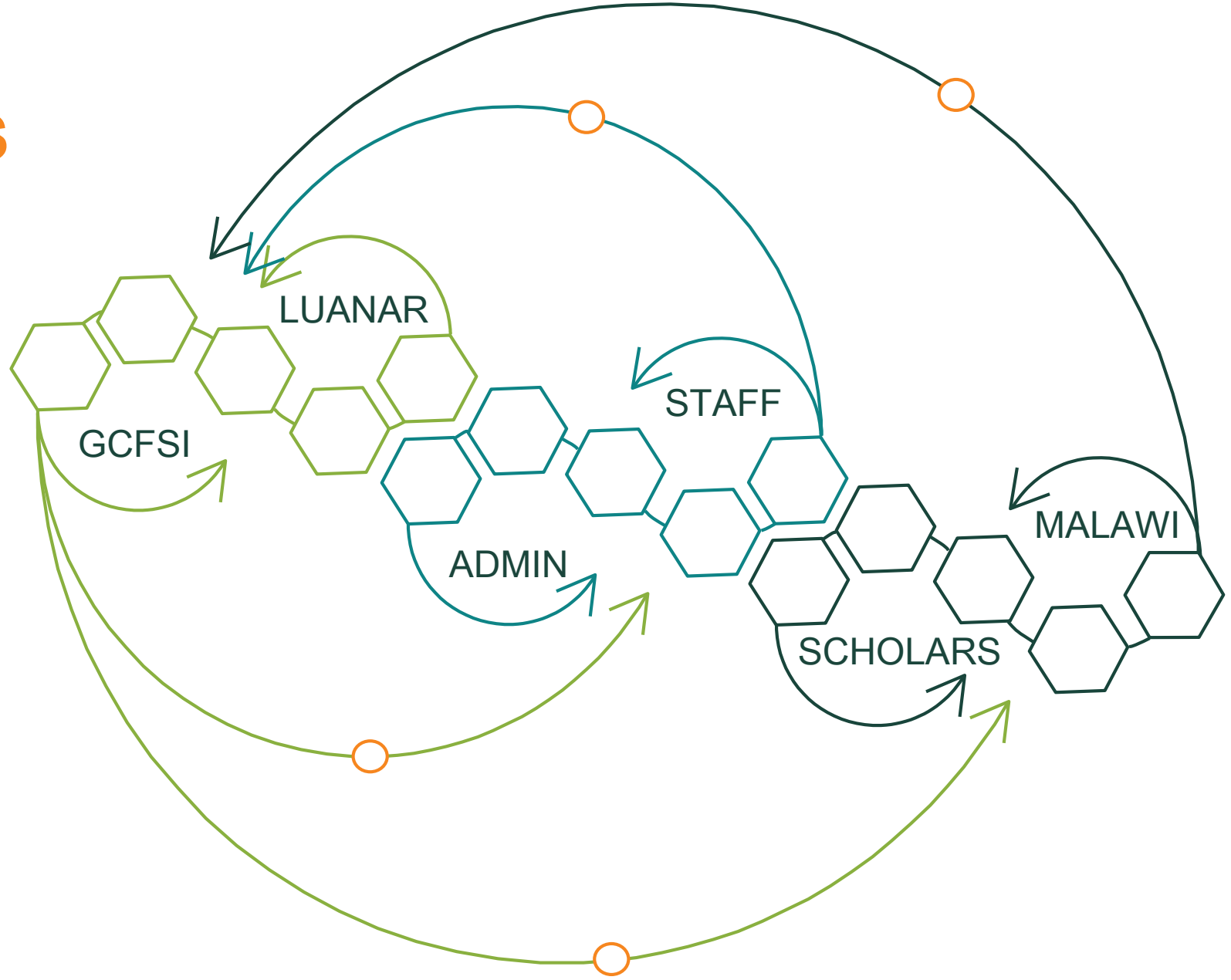
Transformative change becomes the center of the story

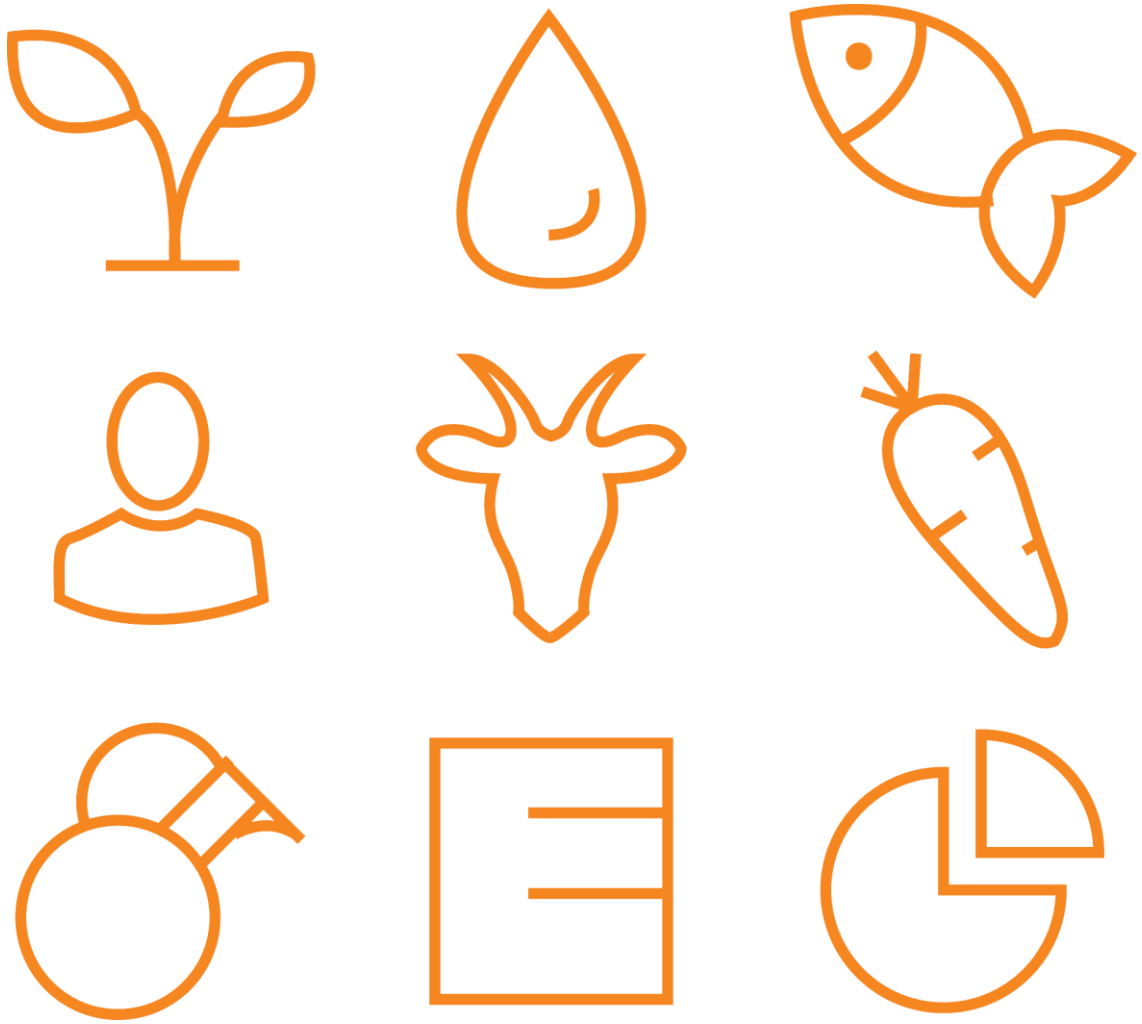
What is the impact?

What did this look like in practice?

Accelerating feedback loops

- *weekly planning meetings*
- *periodic assessment of goals*
- *project updates from scholars*
- *regular coaching meetings*
- *workshop artifacts and field notes*
- *written reflections post-workshop*





Developing and testing innovations in 10 unique areas

Cassava Virus Detection
Water Management
Fish Processing
Leadership Development
Goats
Indigenous Vegetables
Agribusiness Experiential Education
Oil Seeds
Digital Storytelling
Veterinary Medicine Gaming App

Bridging the gap between classroom and community

Dr. Sera Gondwe

Transforming institutional leadership

Community-driven innovation—

Learning from local farmers

INDIGENOUS PLANTS

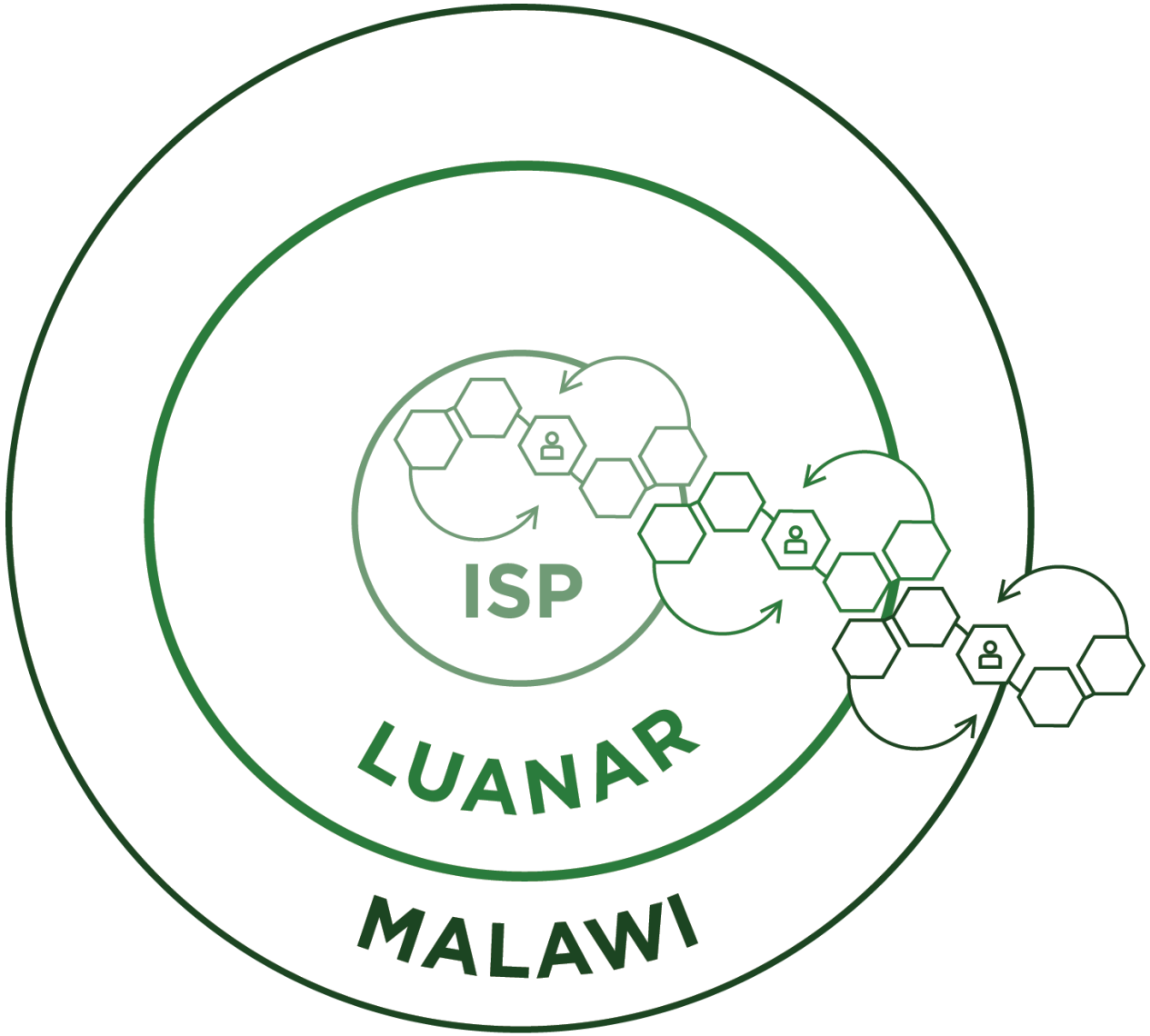
Dr. Abel Sefasi

Scaled Impact through people

Individual students and faculty

University leadership

Community driven innovation



How can **your university** use human-centered approaches to co-create long-term, transformative change *with* and *for* people?

Contact us!

gcfsi.isp.msu.edu

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Thank you.