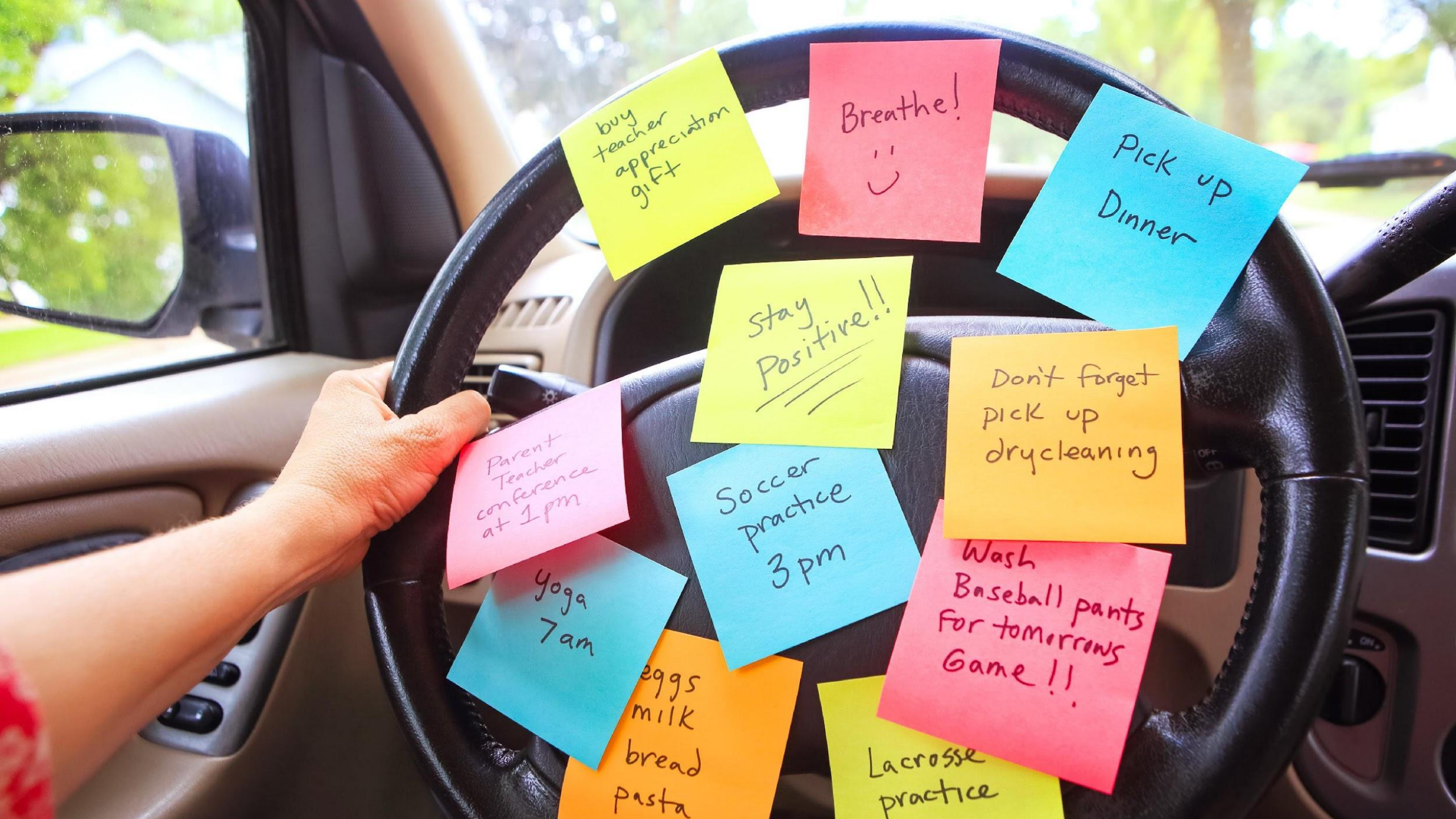
Let’s check in on municipal leaders preparing to communicate…

SPRINGTIME OBSERVATIONS

- **Your audience is under siege.**

  And public institutions are, too.


buy teacher appreciation gift
Breathe!
Pick up Dinner
Stay Positive!!
Don't forget pick up drycleaning
Parent Teacher conference at 1pm
Soccer practice 3pm
Yoga 7am
Wash Baseball pants for tomorrows Game!!
eggs milk bread pasta
Lacrosse practice

Social
internet
notification
mail
network
Media

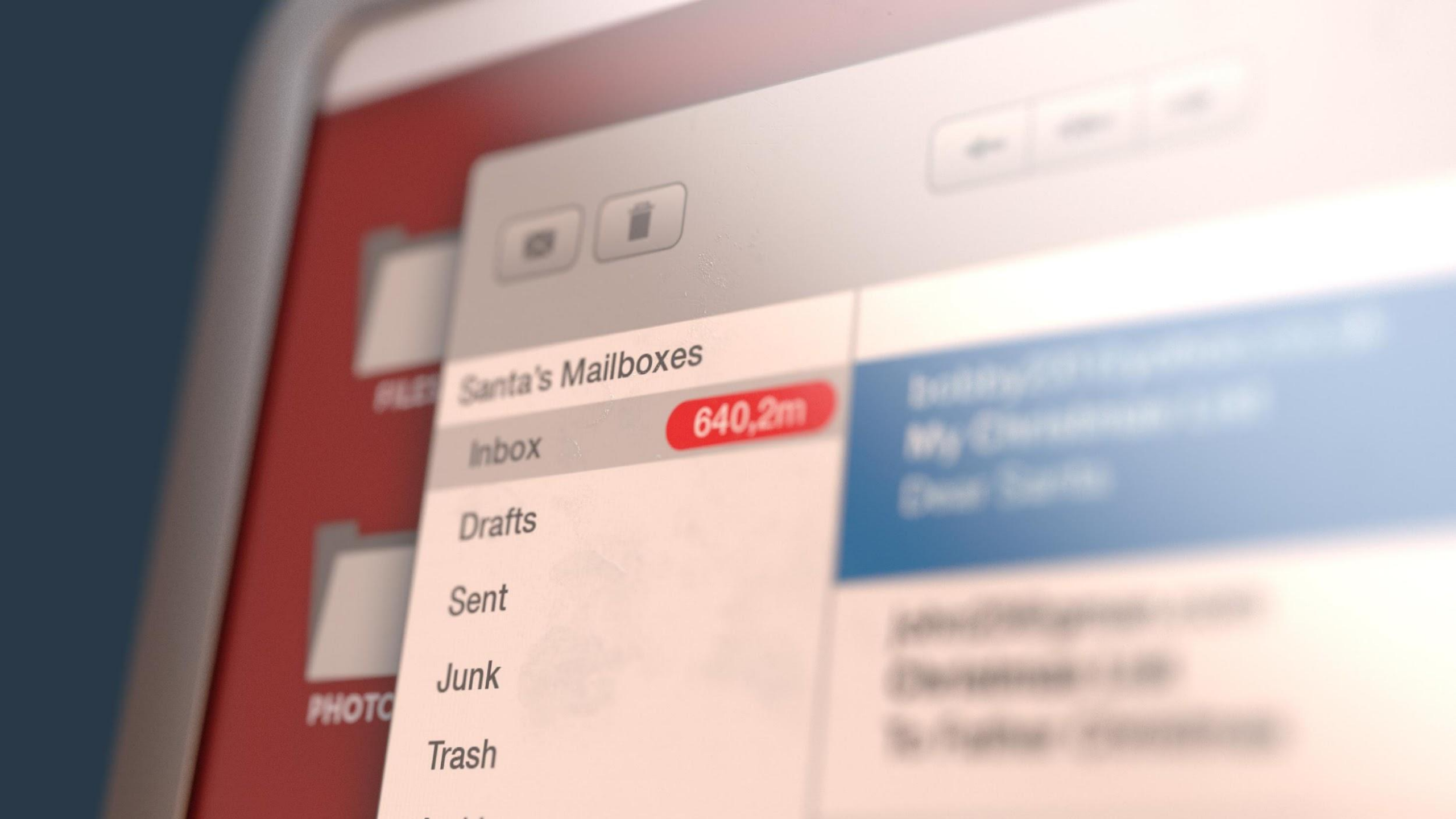
SPRINGTIME OBSERVATIONS

- **Your audience is under siege.**

  And public institutions are, too.

- **Attention is a precious resource**.

  We are in a post-attention economy.


Santa's Mailboxes
Inbox
640,2m
Drafts
Sent
Junk
Trash

SPRINGTIME OBSERVATIONS

- **Your audience is under siege.**

  And public institutions are, too.

- **Attention is a precious resource**.

  We are in a post-attention economy.

- **Human interaction is a luxury good.**

  We must adjust our communication style and methods to connect.

TURN & TALK

- Perspectives from Reading and Wakefield.
- Share your perspective in the chat.

THIS IS OUR ‘WHY’

- **We can wish for a different circumstances,**
  but this is the environment in Spring 2026.
- We’re not selling extended warranties on cars.
  We are protecting a public good.
- **Build goodwill before you need it**.
  At least 90% good news.

OUR GOALS TODAY

- **Style** | Making Budget Communication Accessible

  Reducing Jargon, Visualizing Benefits, Messaging Architecture

- **Method** | Modular Communication

  Produce More Communication with Little Additional Effort

- **Deployment** | Introduction to AMP

  Optimize for the Environment We're Living in

- **Discussion & Questions** | And Maybe Some Answers

MONEY TALK

A Style Guide for Communicating your Budget

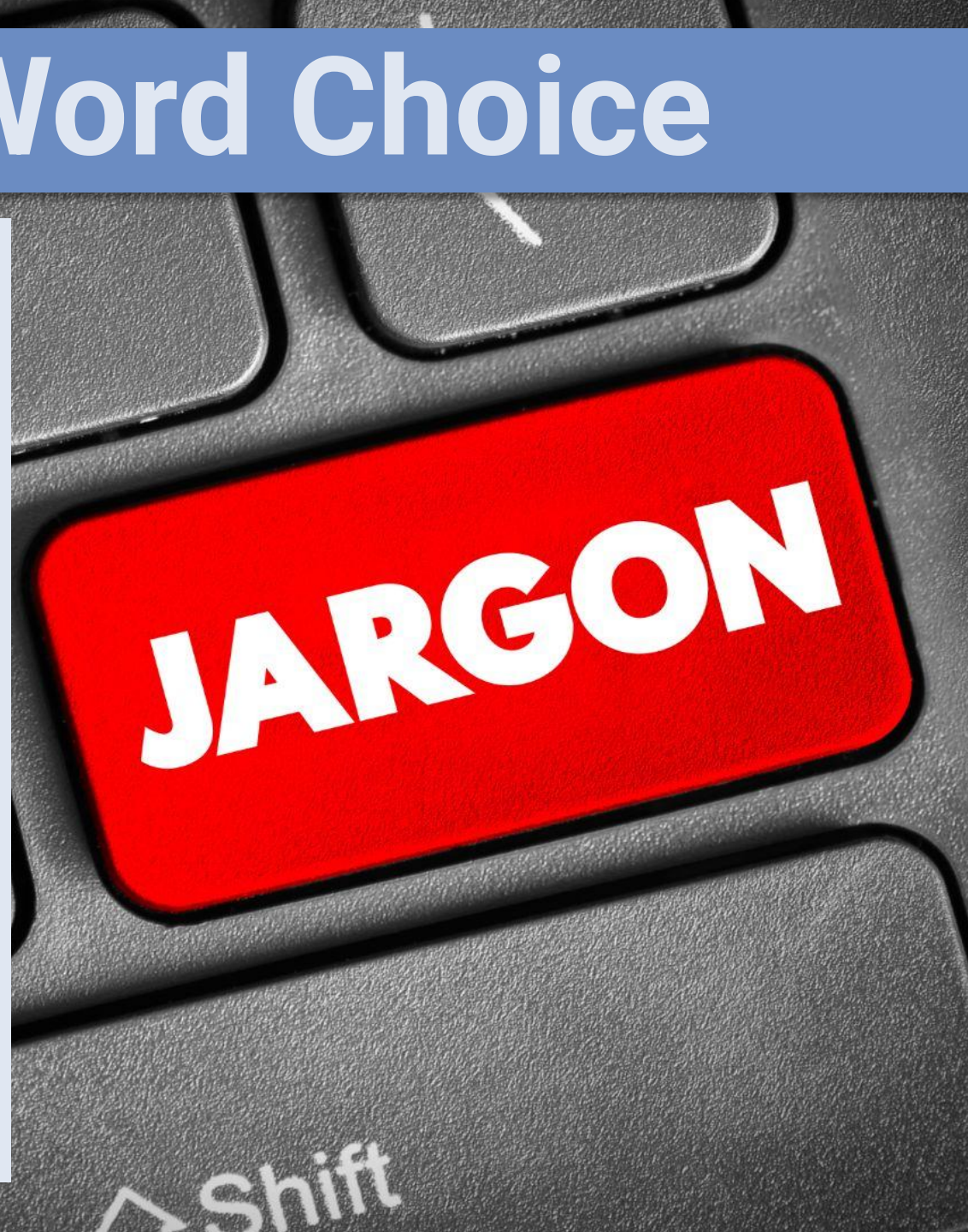
STYLE GUIDE: Word Choice

Internally:

Jargon is a useful shortcut!

Externally:

Jargon is inaccessible.



EXAMPLE: Word Choice

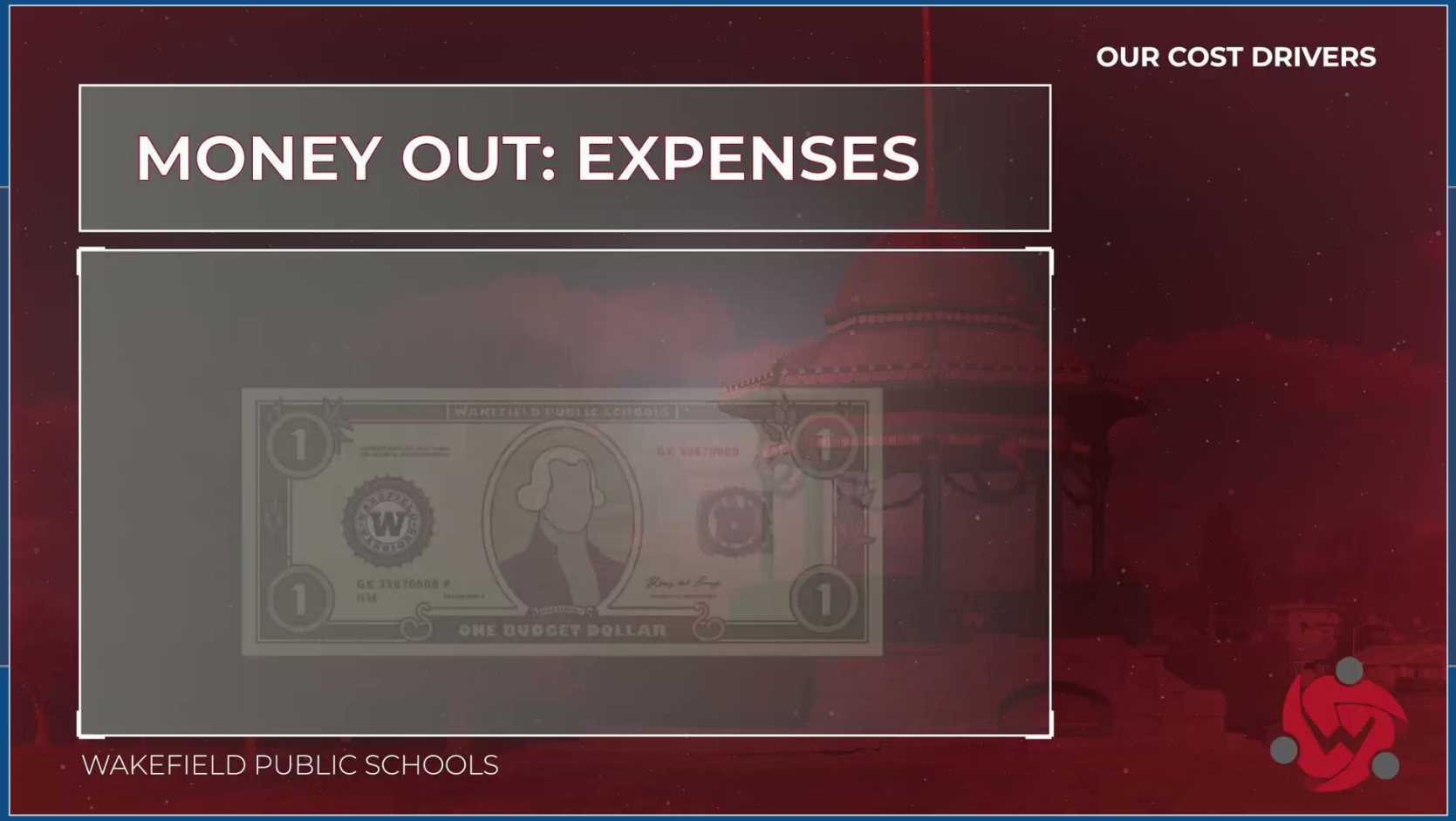
What is a "Revolving Fund?"

Wakefield Public Schools

STYLE GUIDE: Imagery

When choosing your words, **visualize benefits.**

EXAMPLE: Imagery



Personnel Costs

STYLE GUIDE: Structure

Identify shared values.

Define the problem in accessible language.

Share the benefits of your solution.

Call to action.

EXAMPLE: Structure

Statement of Shared Values

Town of Reading

MODULAR COMMUNICATION

An Effective Method for Any Public Servant

MODULAR COMMUNICATION

- Say one thing. That's it.
- Seriously. Just one.
- This is your organizing idea. One. I mean it.

PILLARS OF SUPPORT

- 3-5 things that support your organizing idea.
- Some might call these “talking points.”
- Focus on benefits, not on deficits.

NOT PILLARS OF SUPPORT

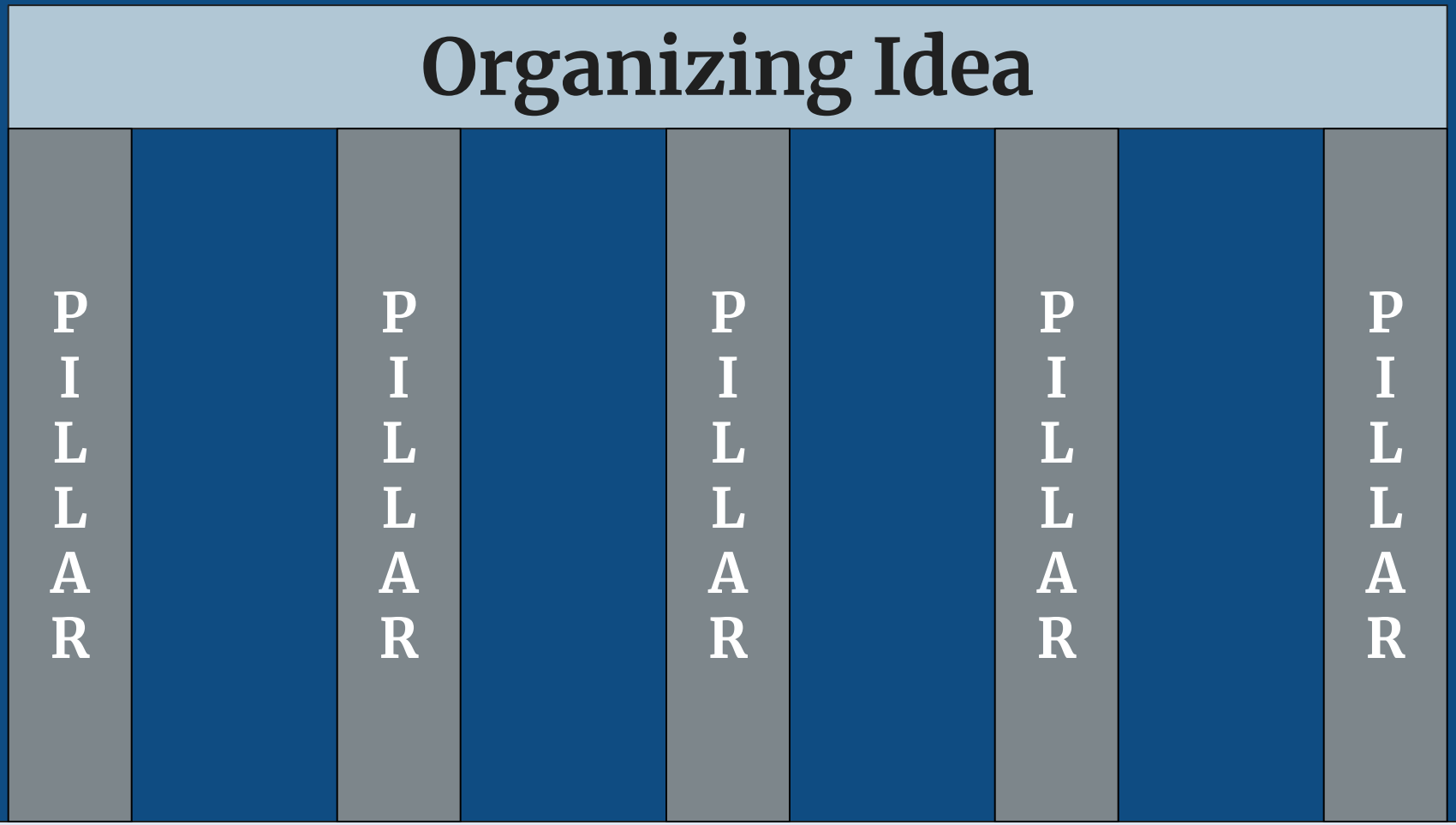
- Defensive statements.
- Process explanations.

PILLARS OF SUPPORT

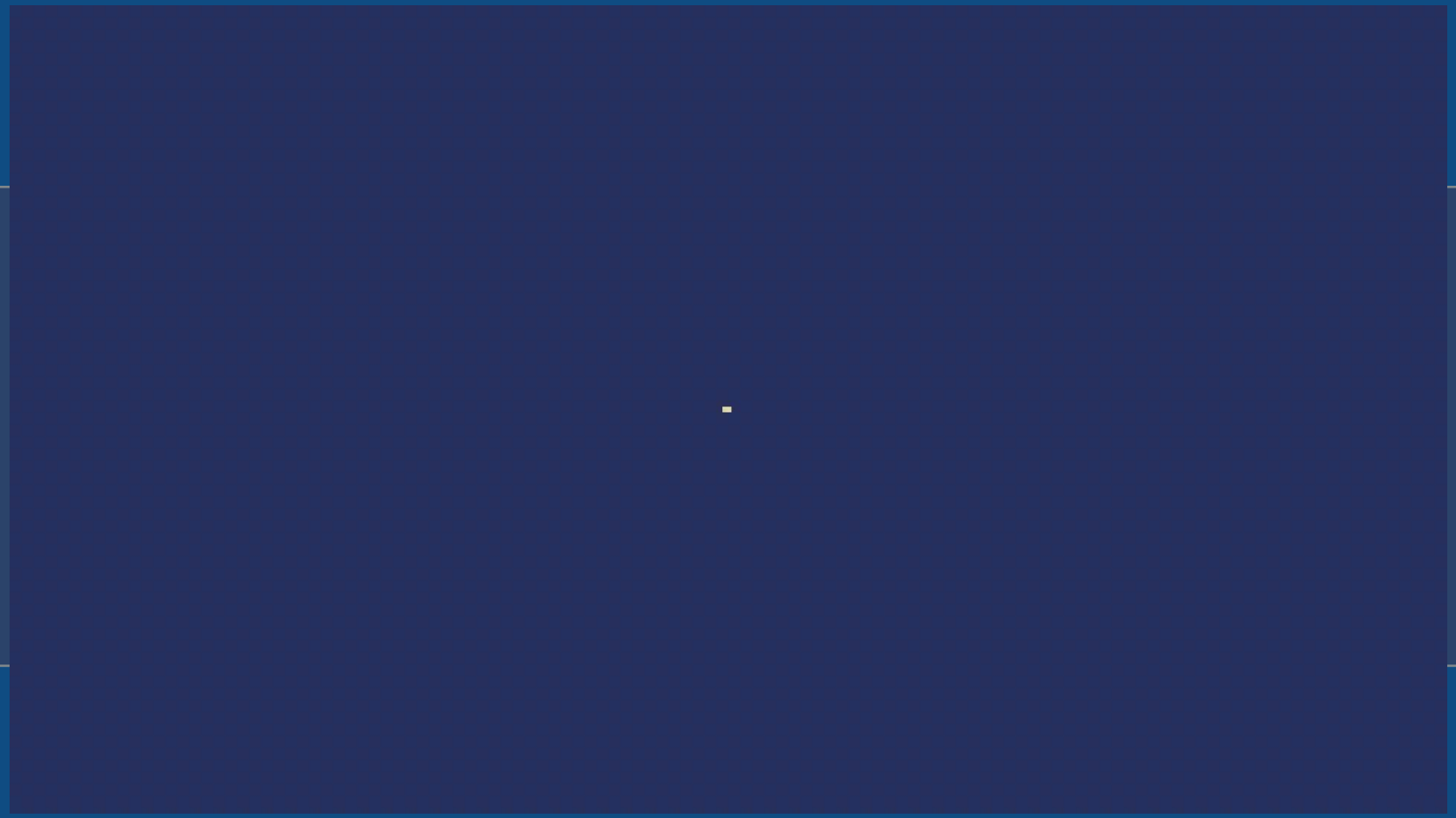
For each pillar of support:

- What are the **shared values** the pillar is built upon?
- Why does the pillar exist (define the **problem**).
- What are the **benefits of the solution** you're proposing?

YOUR BUDGET STORY



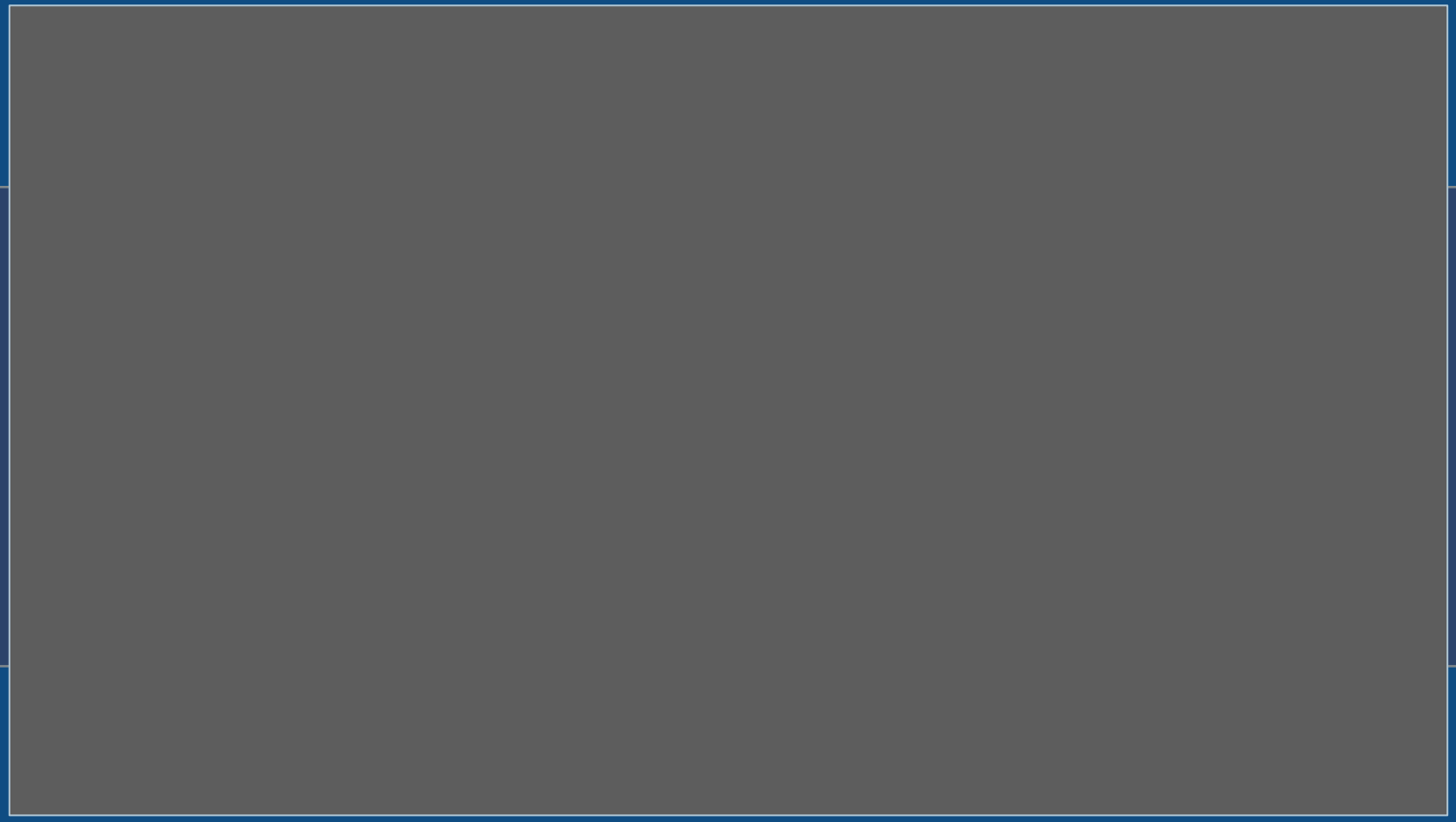
PILLAR EXAMPLE



FY 2027 Budget

Town of Reading

PILLAR EXAMPLE



FY2027 Budget

Wakefield Public Schools

MODULAR METHOD

Organizing Idea

Remove sequential, linear, and transitional language.

PILLAR

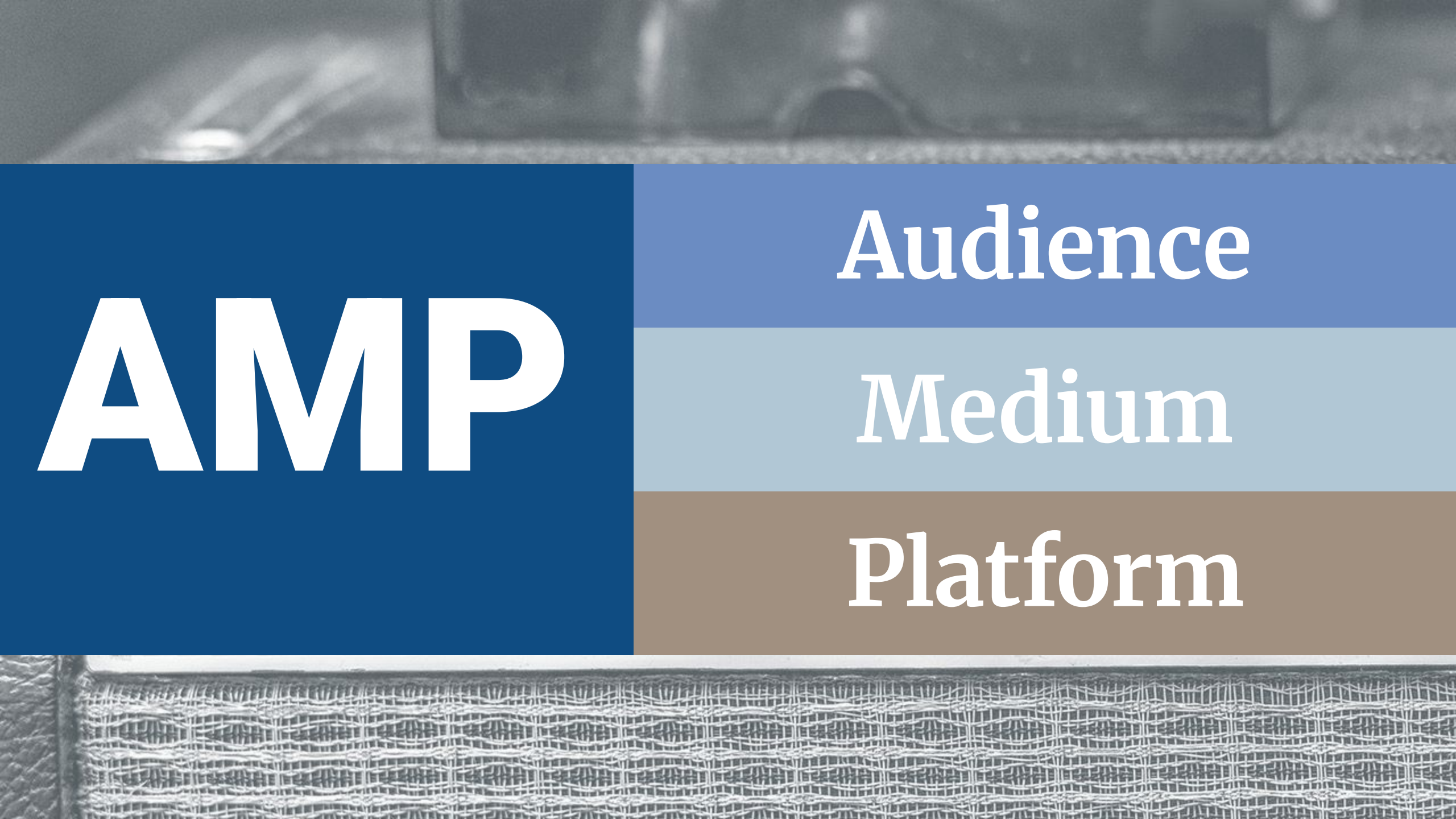
Each pillar supports the organizing idea.

Our Shared Values (Foundation)

MODULAR BENEFITS

Modular method builds stories that are more:

- **Durable** *(narrative and visuals don't spoil)*
- **Flexible** *(languages and platforms)*
- **Efficient** *(accounting is already done in modules)*
- **Sustainable** *(iterate quickly)*


AMP
Audience
Medium
Platform

SIMPLE AMPs

- Consider only what you have.
- Then tweak it for (A)(M)(P).
- Delegate and deploy!

START HERE

Audience: The Whole Community

Medium: Your Budget Presentation

Platform(s): A Public Meeting / Cable Access / Web

ONE SIMPLE AMP

Audience: Seniors

Medium: One Visual Example (ONE!)

Platforms: Screens at Points of Service
Flyers at Points of Service
Cable Access
Social Media

CHECKING FOR TRACTION

- How are you measuring your engagement?
- Before you try something new, get your baselines.
- Normalize repetition.

CLOSING THOUGHTS

- Benefits. Always benefits.
- Attention is a scarce resource.
- Human interaction is a luxury good.
- No has ever complained, “That was too easy to understand!”
- Normalize repetition.
- Create to make **less work**: architecture, modules, AMPs.

THANK YOU

kartoonEDU™
Animating Educational Conversations

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