



# Big Room Planning for Large-Scale, Agile Program Management

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This material is based upon work funded and supported by the Department of Defense under Contract No. FA8702-15-D-0002 with Carnegie Mellon University for the operation of the Software Engineering Institute, a federally funded research and development center.

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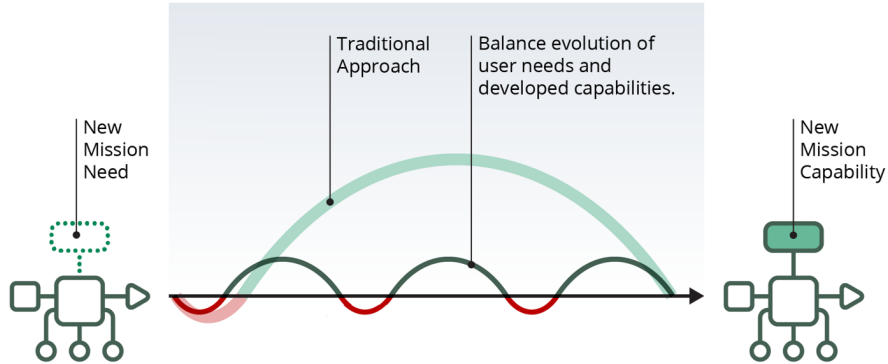
# BLUF

Large government programs must engage at the speed of need – both in technical and acquisition activity - by applying Agile practices to the entirety of the Program Office functions.

We're learning that an Agile mindset and cadence can be scaled and sustained by iterative practices, including, but not limited to, Big Room Planning.

This practice has been adopted by large programs rethinking the formal and informal events used to execute the work needed to achieve technical and program management goals, not just development goals.

# Agenda



- Big Room Planning (in 3 slides)
- Observations on the Adoption of Big Room Planning for Large-Scale Program Offices
- Opportunities and Challenges of Scaling Big Room Planning



# Big Room Planning (in 3 slides)

# Big Room Planning Isn't Just for Developers



Photo source: <https://crisp.se/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Agile@Lego.pdf>

Big Room Planning is an Agile practice for establishing a cadence for iterative planning integrated across an enterprise, while empowering teams to record and plan their next increment of work with the intention of providing demonstrable delivery of value.

## Inputs

- Leadership goals
- Established organizational cadence
- Refined backlog of work
- Event logistics and schedule

## Big Room Planning Activities

- Business context and vision presentation
- Planning process introduction/reminder
- Iterative team planning
- Management review and problem-solving
- Dependency identification and review
- Program risk review
- Confidence vote/plan rework
- Retrospective

## Outputs

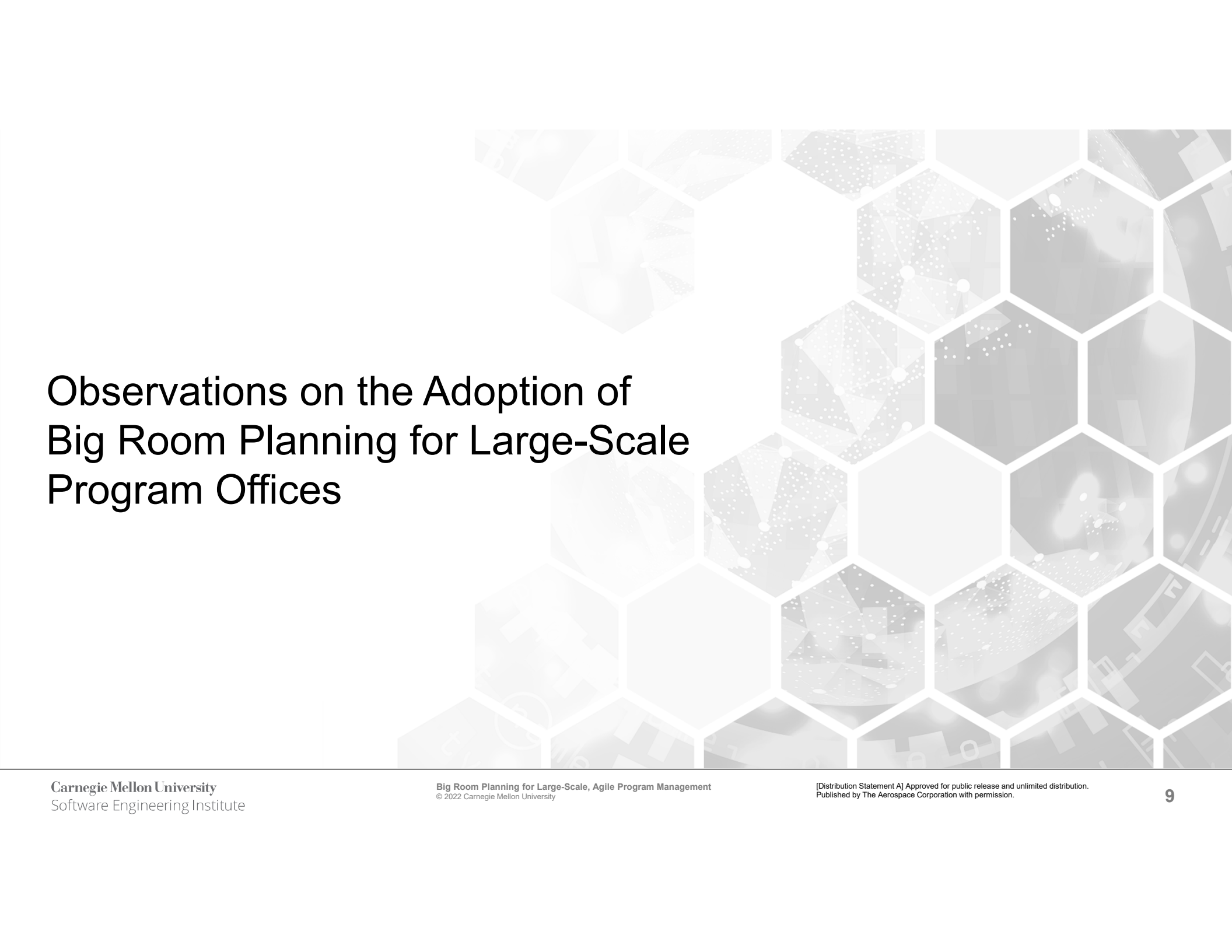
- Realistic objectives
- Program plans boards
- Commitment to plan
- Dependency identification artifact

# There is no magic in scaling Agile... except *maybe* for Big Room Planning



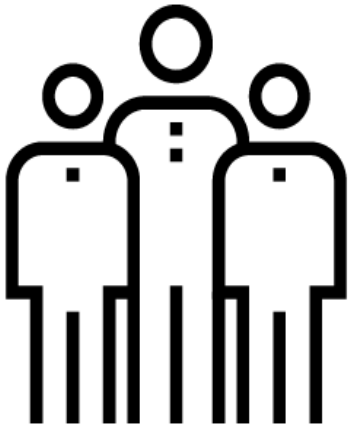
- All stakeholders “face-to-face”
- Management sets the mission, with minimum possible constraints
- Requirements and design emerge
- Important stakeholder decisions are accelerated
- Teams create—and take responsibility for—plans





# Observations on the Adoption of Big Room Planning for Large-Scale Program Offices

# Context



## Large Government Program

- Complex, cyber-physical system
- Diverse program management context
- Evolving planning and execution toolset
- Leadership commitment to Agile
- Big Room Planning practices leveraged the enterprise's existing quarterly planning method

## Software Engineering Institute – FFRDC participation

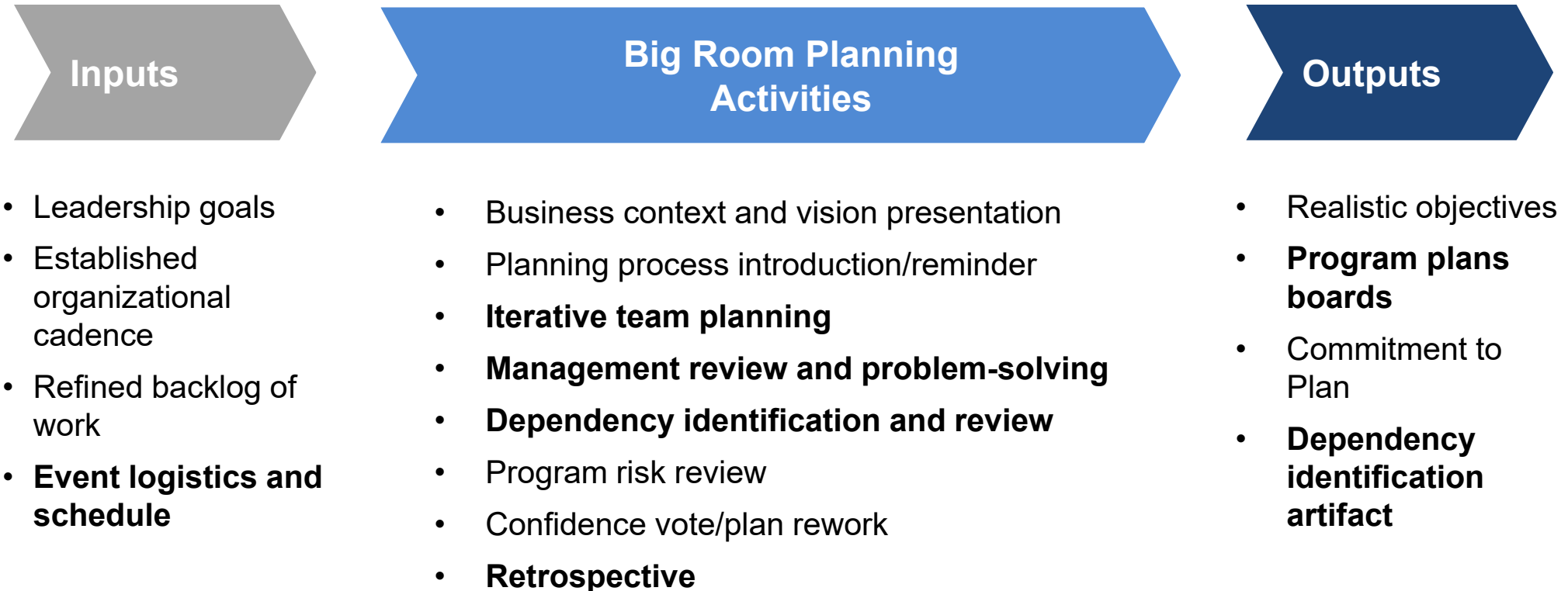
- Program Agile adoption training, coaching, and transition mechanism development
- Leadership coaching

# Observations



- Plan the Planning
  - Planning event
  - Program Office groups' preparation for planning
- Emphasize Learning and Evolution
  - Progress, not perfection!
- Heterogeneity Happens
- Stakeholders
- Agile Mindset Adoption  $\Leftrightarrow$  Tool Adoption
- Agile Principle-Driven Event Design
  - Not all practices adopted at once

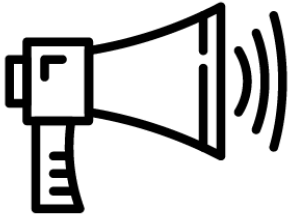
# Design Decisions: How will you do these things?





# Opportunities and Challenges of Scaling Big Room Planning

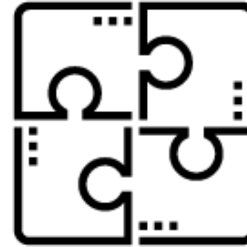
# Challenges



Big Room Reporting



Camps of Waterfall Teams



Perfect vs Reality



Building Trust



Anticipating Cost



(Un)Common Tooling



Going Virtual

# Opportunities



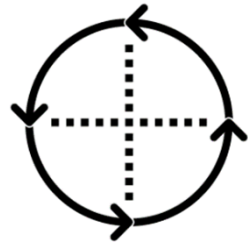
New Visibility



Shared Cadence



Top Cover &  
Goal Vision



Explicit  
Plan-Do-Check-Adjust



Agility during  
Adoption



“Too Big”  
Can Work

# Take Aways

Even large, service-oriented government organizations can successfully use Big Room Planning to improve the transparency and collaboration aspects of their work

- Leaders who engage in using information directly from collaboration tools vs waiting for activity reports have the ability to react more quickly to emerging risks and problems

The planning and execution of this type of planning takes both labor and non-labor resources!

- For your first event, you will probably need 2-3% of the number of staff attending to be involved in planning-specific roles and activities

Not everyone will adopt the new way of planning at the same rate

- Leadership mixing urgency with patience is a challenge that must be addressed



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