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# Atoms and Bytes: Distance Education and Community Colleges

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# ATOMS AND BYTES: DISTANCE EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY COLLEGES



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## CONTEXT

SUNY Broome Community College considers expanding its distance education offerings to meet growing interest from both students and instructors on campus. However, current institutional infrastructure cannot adequately support such an expansion.

How can SUNY Broome boost its distance education efforts on campus, and eventually establish a virtual academy?

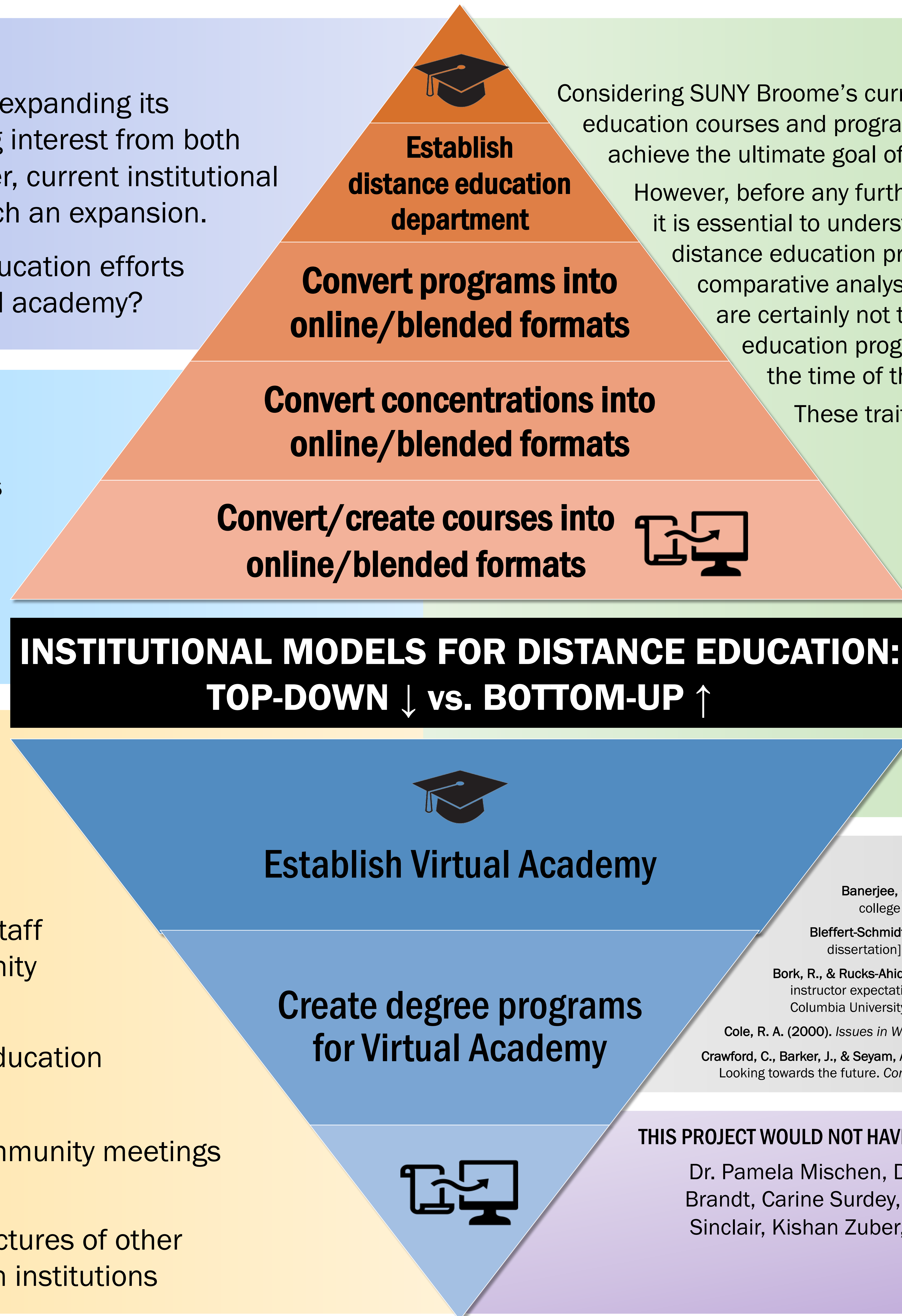
## DEFINITIONS

**Blended learning** refers to courses or programs where 30% - 70% of the material is delivered online, synchronously or asynchronously.

**Distance education** encompasses both online and blended learning.

## METHODS

- **Perused** literature on distance education in higher education, specifically focusing on community colleges
- **Conducted** 14 in-person interviews with staff and instructors at SUNY Broome Community College
- **Consulted** leading scholars in distance education and nontraditional education
- **Attended** Distance Learning Steering Community meetings at SUNY Broome Community College
- **Researched** distance education infrastructures of other community colleges and higher education institutions

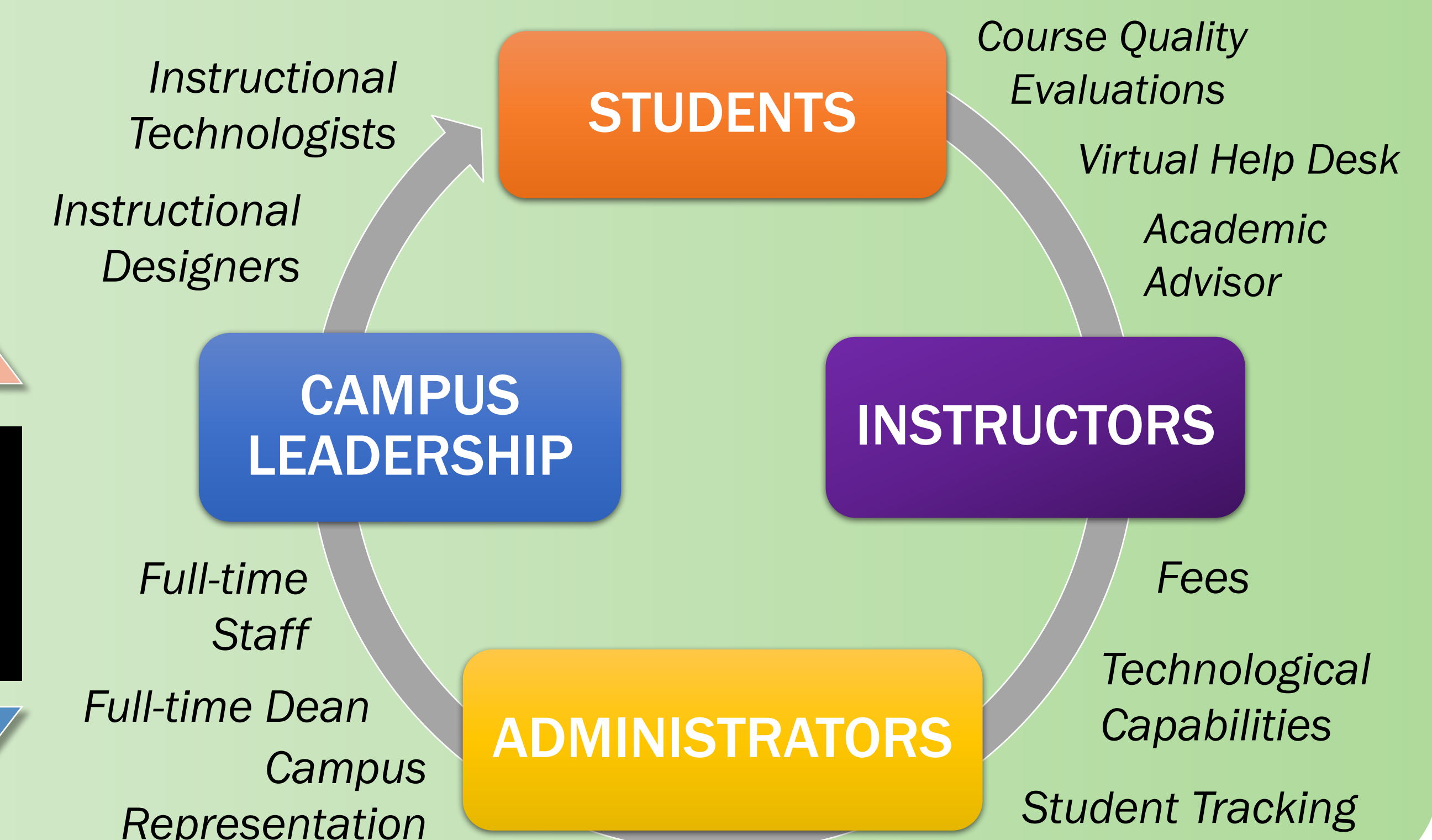


## FINDINGS & RECOMMENDATIONS

Considering SUNY Broome's current needs, available resources, and existing distance education courses and programs, I recommend adopting the bottom-up approach to achieve the ultimate goal of establishing a virtual academy.

However, before any further investment of valuable time and funding is made, it is essential to understand the fundamental characteristics of successful distance education programs, as gleaned from current literature and a comparative analysis of other colleges and universities. While these traits are certainly not the only elements needed for a sustainable distance education program, they are the most pertinent to SUNY Broome at the time of this research.

These traits can be attributed to four main stakeholders:



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