ELEVATE LABS WAYFINDER 360

Dana Whitfield: Positioning Memo

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Sample report. Names and identifying details have been changed.

LANGUAGE FOR MY NEXT CHAPTER

This is a positioning summary from a leadership reflection process I completed through Elevate Labs. The language in it comes from how the people who know my work actually describe it. It exists so I can describe my value as plainly as they do, on LinkedIn, in interviews, and in consulting conversations.

How I Describe Myself Now

I help cities, regions, and institutions turn policy into implemented reality. My work sits at the intersection of economic development, public policy, and institutional strategy: reading complex environments, building coalitions across government, academia, and the private sector, and creating the structure that lets different actors produce something together. People who have worked with me describe a strategist who executes, trusted with hard problems, and at my best when I'm setting the pace.

What I'm Known For

Strategy that ships. I don't stop at the framework or the recommendation. During my fellowship, I helped build capacity inside my host department and across other city departments, and contributed to work that became a policy framework later adopted by other cities. The distance between concept and execution is where I do my best work.

Opening doors and building coalitions. I connect people, ideas, and institutions across government, multilateral organizations, universities, and the private sector, and I turn those connections into concrete opportunities. When something needs the right people in the room, I know who they are and they take my call.

Growing the people around me. I lead by building capacity, not dependence. People who have worked under my guidance describe taking ownership, making bigger decisions, and performing at a higher level. I'm at my strongest as a guide and a mentor, someone people learn from and not just report to.

In Their Words

"She trusts my judgment and empowers me to lead. She gives me the space to take ownership, make decisions, and move things forward with confidence... That trust has helped me perform at a higher level and grow as a leader."

> *“One of Dana’s most significant contributions to my work was her ability to bring innovative thinking to complex public policy challenges while maintaining a strong focus on stakeholder needs.”*

> *“I think of her as a catalyst to get things done and incredibly knowledgeable.”*

> *“Dana shines brightest as a mentor not a subordinate.”*

Where I Do My Best Work

Three conditions, and I’m looking for at least two in any role or engagement:

- **Cross-sector complexity:** problems that require industry, government, academia, and community to move together.
- **An implementation mandate:** work where I’m accountable for delivery, not just advice. Design and build, not design and hand off.
- **Pace-setting authority:** a seat where I set the tempo. I’m at my best leading the work, not waiting on permission to move it.

Words I Can Use

The vocabulary people reach for about my work, available for my headline, my About section, and my answers: strategic, trusted, wise, empowering, execution-driven, authentic, generous, decisive, collaborative, engaging, high-performing, a guide, and a mentor. And the story no one who knows me would believe: that I’m complacent, disengaged, or a follower.

Ready-to-Use Lines

LinkedIn headline

> Economic development and public policy strategist | Turning policy into implementation | Advisor to cities, regions, and institutions navigating economic transition

About opener

> I’ve spent my career in the gap between good policy and real outcomes, helping cities, ministries, and institutions design programs that respond to actual needs, then getting them built.

When someone asks what I do

> I’m the person institutions bring in when policy needs to become real. I read the landscape, bring the right people to the table, and build the structure that turns a strategy into a running program.