



# **THE RIDGELINE COLLECTIVE**

*Charting the Way, Learning the Edges*

*Annual Report 2025*

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### **What we did**

Redesigned WHO WPRO's STAR as a facilitation-centered process

Tested a network-based delivery model in practice

Explored and established strategic partnerships

### **Where we worked**

Philippines, Western Pacific Region, Southeast Asia

### **How we worked**

Human sense-making first; tools second

Network-based project leadership model

### **Why it mattered**

Stronger judgment, engagement, and shared ownership

*2025 was our first operational year. This report reflects our learning through practice.*



## Managing Director's Reflection

Although The Ridgeline Collective was established in 2022, operations formally began in July 2025. This formative operational year was defined not by scale, but by learning through practice: clarifying who we are, how we work, and where we add the most value.

Our core focus this year was supporting the World Health Organization's Western Pacific Regional Office (WHO WPRO) to redesign the Strategic Tool for Assessing Risks (STAR) process. Working with regional subject matter experts, we reimagined STAR as a more participatory and human-centered process, grounded in adult learning principles. We piloted the approach with national and regional professionals from the Philippines Department of Health, surfacing diverse perspectives and strengthening discussion quality.

This work generated an important organizational learning. While computer-based tools can improve efficiency, they also reduce human engagement. In contexts where multisectoral collaboration and shared sense-making are essential, the tool must follow the thinking, not replace it.

Adapting in real time, we refined a process that prioritizes human discussion and collective reasoning first, using digital tools second to consolidate outcomes. We are now codifying this pattern across our work.

Alongside this work, we initiated strategic relationship-building with the ASEAN Field Epidemiology Training Network (ASEAN FETN), including presenting The Ridgeline Collective to representatives of its eleven member states at a steering committee meeting in Jakarta. We also applied for the WHO Academy's Long-Term Agreement (LTA) to design and deliver its courses.

That experience proved formative for the organization. It demonstrated our ability to rapidly assemble high-caliber teams from across our network and clarified the kind of organization we are building: *a boutique, facilitation-centered consultancy focused on depth, quality, and engagement rather than volume.*

Through that submission process, we also established a promising collaboration with Bell Immersive Technologies, whose work in simulations and serious games complements our strengths in facilitated, human-centered learning, enhancing rather than replacing human interaction and judgment.

The way we pulled a team together for the LTA submission reflects the heart of The Ridgeline Collective's network model. We work with trusted and experienced professionals across

disciplines, combining their subject-matter expertise with our core strengths in facilitation, learning design, and delivery. This model responds directly to a persistent challenge in professional spheres: the assumption that subject-matter expertise equals effective training. Facilitation is a professional skill; pairing it with technical expertise strengthens them both.

The year also accelerated our organizational learning curve. Opportunities arrived more quickly than anticipated, prompting deeper involvement from key contributors, including our proposal writer, Izolda Matevosyan, and Dr. Manyando Simbotwe, who led the WHO WPRO STAR project and subsequently took on the role of Interim Director of Operations and Strategy to prepare our next phase of development. This unanticipated situation underscored the need for increased leadership focus, and in 2026 I intend to dedicate more time to The Ridgeline Collective, reducing individual consultancies and, where possible, channeling work through the organization to deliver with strong teams.

Our priorities for 2026 are clear. We aim to deepen relationships with partners and collaborators, codify our practice into durable assets, and bring our flagship training, *Learning Learning to Transform Training*, to a wider audience. We remain committed to growing slowly and deliberately, perfecting our craft, clarifying our edges, and building a core group of facilitators who can support clients with skill, care, and integrity.



This year reminded us that growth is not always gradual. The slopes steepened faster than expected, but by climbing together and pausing to reflect at each new height, we embraced the ridgeline itself. Its lessons guide us forward.

*Matthew Myers Griffith, PhD*  
Managing Director  
The Ridgeline Collective



## Who We Are

### Values in Practice

The Ridgeline Collective holds three core values: **Curiosity, Connection, and Clarity**. These are not abstract ideals or branding language. They describe how we design learning, how we facilitate groups, how we collaborate with partners, and how we decide what work to accept. Our values are visible in our practice.

### Our Purpose

The Ridgeline Collective exists to strengthen how people learn, think, and decide together in complex systems.

We work in environments where:

- problems are not fully defined,
- expertise is distributed across roles and disciplines, and
- decisions carry real consequences.

While our roots are in public health, the challenge we address is broader: technically capable systems often struggle not because of a lack of knowledge, but because people lack the conditions to integrate perspectives, test assumptions, and arrive at shared judgment.

Our purpose is to build a sustainable, boutique learning organization that helps groups:

- surface what they do not yet know,
- connect expertise across boundaries, and
- act with greater clarity in moments that matter.



## How We Work

*Our values shape a consistent set of design and facilitation practices.*



### **Curiosity — learning begins with not knowing**

We design learning environments that make room for uncertainty, inquiry, and exploration. Rather than confirming assumptions or prescribing answers, we invite participants to examine what is emerging in their own contexts.

We express this through:

- experiential learning designs that prioritize discovery over instruction,
- real cases that expose ambiguity rather than simplify it, and
- facilitation that treats questions as assets, not obstacles.

Curiosity keeps our work adaptive, alive, and grounded.



### **Connection — learning through relationships**

We treat learning as a social practice, not an individual transaction. In-sight emerges through dialogue, disagreement, and shared reflection across perspectives.

In practice, this means:

- designing interaction that is purposeful rather than performative,
- prioritizing facilitation over content delivery, and
- investing time in understanding people, contexts, and systems before proposing solutions.

Connection is not a byproduct of our work. It is the medium through which learning occurs.



### **Clarity — understanding without false certainty**

We understand clarity not as having the “right answer,” but as reaching a state of shared understanding that enables sound judgment and action.

We design for clarity by:

- anchoring learning in real decisions participants must make,
- linking cases directly to judgment calls rather than abstract frameworks, and
- introducing tools and structures only after collective sense-making has occurred.

Clarity allows people to move forward with confidence, without fixing answers in place.

## What We Do *Not* Do

We reinforce our values as much through what we decline as what we deliver. The boundaries below signal what partners can expect when working with The Ridgeline Collective.

### **No slide-dump “Training of Trainers”**

We do not treat Training of Trainers as the transfer of materials to be replicated unchanged. While structured curricula and standardized content play a vital role in scaling guidance, they are only effective when trainers understand the *purpose* behind the design and can exercise judgment in delivery.

In our work, we approach Training of Trainers as a *Learning Facilitation Lab*, not a handover. Participants engage with the intent of the training, practice facilitation in real time, and reflect on how learning translates across contexts. Materials become tools for inquiry—tested, adapted, and refined through practice—rather than scripts to follow.

### **No template-driven thinking**

We do not treat frameworks or templates as finished answers or universal solutions. While standardized guidance is essential—particularly in global and regional work—we approach these tools with curiosity rather than reverence.

Frameworks are tools to investigate, not dictate. We support groups to examine how guidance works on the ground: where it fits, where it strains, and where it may need to be adapted, augmented, or set aside. Templates serve collective reasoning and learning; they do not replace judgment or substitute for contextual understanding.

### **No performative participation**

We do not design activities simply to appear interactive. Participation is meaningful only when linked to real questions, real decisions, and real consequences.

Engagement without substance does not produce learning. Our designs prioritize depth over display, ensuring that participation contributes to understanding, judgment, and action rather than performance.

Together, these choices reflect how we work: *deliberately, relationally, and with care for how understanding forms*. They allow us to support clients across sectors who are navigating complexity and who value depth, rigor, and thoughtful action over speed or scale.



## 2025 at a Glance

Our first operational year prioritized practice, learning, and consolidation rather than scale.

 <h3>Reach &amp; Engagement</h3>	<p><b>Countries and regions engaged:</b> Philippines; Papua New Guinea; WHO Western Pacific Region (WHO WPR); Southeast Asia (ASEAN)</p> <p><b>Workshop delivered:</b> WHO WPR STAR Risk Profiling pilot</p> <p><b>Participants:</b> 20 national and regional professionals from public health and disaster management</p>
 <h3>Partners &amp; Institutions</h3>	<p><b>Clients and collaborators:</b> WHO WPR Office; Field Epidemiology in Action / University of Newcastle</p> <p><b>Strategic collaborator:</b> Bell Immersive Technologies</p> <p><b>Applied and exploratory partnerships:</b> WHO Academy (Long-Term Agreement application); ASEAN+3 Field Epidemiology Training Network</p>
 <h3>Workstreams &amp; Outputs</h3>	<p><b>Key initiatives</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Redesign of the WHO WPR STAR workshop</li> <li>Redesign of theridgelinecollective.org</li> <li>Submission of institutional proposals (including WHO Academy LTA)</li> <li>Network-based project leadership and delivery model tested in practice</li> </ul> <p><b>Products developed</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revised WHO WPR STAR workshop design</li> <li>STAR Facilitator's Manual (drafted and iterated through live delivery)</li> <li>Internal facilitation patterns and design principles (in development)</li> </ul>
 <h3>Organizational &amp; Network Development</h3>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transition from individual consultancy to team-based delivery</li> <li>Interim Director of Operations and Strategy initiated</li> <li>Proposal development, facilitation, and delivery functions clarified</li> <li>Presentation to ASEAN+3 FETN Steering Committee (11 countries)</li> <li>Exploratory conversations with 27 professionals on potential collaboration</li> <li>Foundation laid for codifying practice into durable learning assets</li> </ul>
 <h3>Posture Toward 2026</h3>	<p><i>More targeted submissions and focused projects</i></p> <p><i>Clearer organizational edges</i></p> <p><i>Stronger codified facilitation practice</i></p> <p><i>Continued investment in networked collaboration</i></p>



## Key Workstreams & Highlights

*Learning through practice, as an organization*

### WHO WPRO STAR Redesign & Pilot

#### Context / problem

The Strategic Tool for Assessing Risks (STAR) is widely used to support multisectoral risk profiling, but workshops often prioritize completion of the tool over collective reasoning. This can limit engagement, constrain discussion, and reduce shared ownership of outcomes.

#### What we did

The Ridgeline Collective worked with WHO WPRO and regional subject-matter experts to redesign the STAR workshop as a facilitated learning process. We piloted the revised approach with national and regional professionals from the Philippines Department of Health, integrating structured dialogue, case-based scenarios, and staged use of the STAR Excel tool.



#### What was different

We designed the workshop to be highly participatory, grounded in adult learning, and oriented toward real decision-making. Facilitation emphasized active discussion, practice in managing group dynamics, and reflection on learning. Scenarios included time pressure and uncertainty, mirroring real emergency conditions. Daily feedback created space for collective sense-making.

#### What changed

Participants reported increased confidence in facilitation, stronger ability to manage discussions, and clearer understanding of risk profiling's connection to preparedness and response. Hands-on exercises and authentic scenarios fostered engagement. The pilot fortified a design principle now applied across our work: *human sense-making first, tools second*.

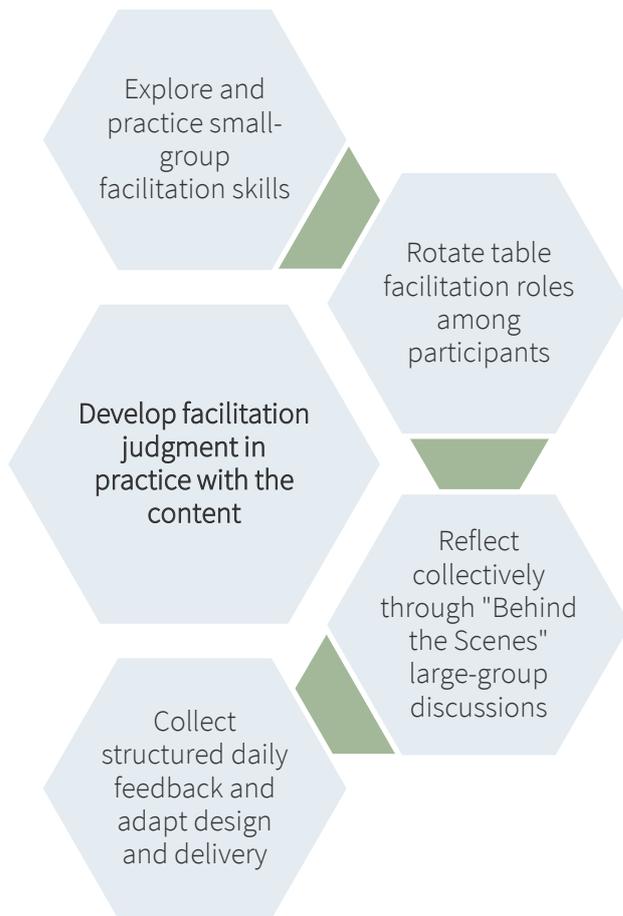
*Participants highlighted the value of practicing facilitation in real time, the realism of scenarios under time pressure, and the role of structured reflection in supporting learning.*

## Facilitation-Centered Training of Trainers (within STAR)

### Context / problem

Training of Trainers is often treated as a handover of materials, with limited attention to facilitation skill, design intent, or adaptation across contexts.

### Ridgeline *Learning Facilitation Lab* process.



than prescribing delivery.

### What we did

As part of the STAR redesign, Ridgeline reframed Training of Trainers as a *Learning Facilitation Lab*. Participants worked with the underlying intent of the workshop design, practiced facilitation in live sessions, and used structured reflection to examine facilitation choices and group dynamics.

### What was different

Rather than preparing participants to replicate content, the focus was on developing facilitation judgment. Participants practiced managing discussion, navigating multisectoral perspectives, and responding to uncertainty under realistic conditions. Materials and tools were prompts for inquiry—supporting sense-making rather

### What changed

Participants showed increased confidence in facilitating discussion, clearer understanding of how and why design choices matter, and greater readiness to adapt the workshop for cascade delivery. Facilitation skill improved not through instruction alone, but through practice, feedback, and reflection embedded in delivery.

## Network-Based Project Leadership & Delivery

### **Context / problem**

Small organizations often struggle to scale work without diluting quality, while larger organizations can lose coherence through fragmented delivery.

### **What we did**

In 2025, Ridgeline intentionally tested a network-based delivery model, bringing together trusted collaborators to lead, support, and contribute to projects while maintaining clear ownership and facilitation standards.

### **What was different**

Rather than expanding headcount, we emphasized clear roles, shared facilitation language, and distributed leadership grounded in practice.

### **What changed**

Projects benefited from deeper expertise without loss of coherence. Internally, this clarified how Ridgeline can grow capacity through collaboration rather than size.

## Codifying Practice into Durable Assets

### **Context / problem**

Much facilitation expertise remains tacit, making it difficult to transfer, teach, or scale without losing quality.

### **What we did**

Alongside live delivery, Ridgeline began codifying facilitation patterns, design principles, and guidance emerging from practice—most notably through the development of the STAR Facilitator’s Manual.

### **What was different**

We treated documentation as a living extension of practice, shaped and refined through delivery rather than produced in isolation.

### **What changed**

This work laid the foundation for turning lived experience into durable learning assets, a priority that will continue into 2026 as part of Ridgeline’s core strategy.



## What Participants & Partners Said

*Selected reflections from 2025 collaborations*

*“I had the option of attending two different workshops. After today, I know I made the right choice.”*

— STAR PARTICIPANT, PHILIPPINES

*“Every training in WHO should start like this—with a session to practice facilitation.”*

— WHO WPRO COLLABORATOR, PHILIPPINES

*“Through this application process, I realized there are technical skills I can continue to strengthen. I appreciated the chance to reflect on that openly and to learn alongside the team.”*

— WHO ACADEMY LTA PROPOSAL COLLABORATOR, VIET NAM

*“I very much appreciated the trust built from the very first moment. Being invited into the thinking—rather than expected to simply fit in—made me more committed and more effective.”*

— WHO ACADEMY LTA PROPOSAL COLLABORATOR, ARMENIA

*“My thanks for bringing us together. I hope we have the opportunity to work together again.”*

— WHO ACADEMY LTA PROPOSAL COLLABORATOR, USA



## How We Are Building the Collective

We are building The Ridgeline Collective deliberately. Our aim is not rapid expansion, but the careful development of a small, capable organization that can do complex work well and sustain it over time.

### **A network-based model**

Ridgeline operates through a network of trusted associates rather than a large permanent staff. We collaborate with experienced professionals across disciplines, engaging them based on fitness, expertise, and the needs of specific projects. This model allows us to draw on deep, relevant experience while maintaining coherence, quality, and clear accountability.

### **Careful growth by design**

We are intentional about what we take on and how we grow. We accept new work only when it aligns with our purpose and our principles. We prioritize fewer projects, clearer edges, and deeper learning over volume or visibility. Growth, when it occurs, is something to absorb thoughtfully rather than to pursue for its own sake.

### **Investing in facilitation skill**

Our primary investment is in facilitation capacity. We focus on developing shared language, patterns, and judgment around learning design and delivery. This includes reflective practice, peer feedback, and ongoing refinement of how to make facilitation decisions in real time. Strengthening facilitation skill is central to maintaining quality across all workstreams.

### **Building systems slowly and intentionally**

Alongside delivery, we are putting foundational systems in place to support sustainability. These include clearer project leadership roles, proposal development processes, documentation standards, and financial discipline. We introduce systems only when they serve practice and reduce friction, not when they add unnecessary complexity.

Together, these choices reflect how we are building The Ridgeline Collective:

*Through trust rather than scale*

*Skill rather than size, and*

*Systems that support judgment rather than replace it.*



## Financial Snapshot

### High-Level Overview

2025 was The Ridgeline Collective's first operational year. Financial decisions during the year prioritized establishing organizational foundations, supporting collaborators fairly, and investing in learning and facilitation capacity.

### Revenue Sources

Total revenue for 2025 was approximately USD 30,000, derived from a small number of institutional consulting and facilitation engagements.

This included:

- workshop design and delivery,
- facilitation of learning processes, and
- associated technical and preparatory support.

Revenue was intentionally concentrated to ensure quality delivery, learning continuity, and organizational focus during this foundational year.

### Operating Expenses

Total operating expenses reflected foundational investments and delivery costs associated with early organizational development, including:

- Professional fees and collaborator compensation: facilitation, technical contributions, proposal development
- Delivery and engagement costs: travel and in-person facilitation support
- Organizational infrastructure: website redesign, software communications, and basic systems
- Administrative and compliance costs: banking, insurance, licenses, and related expenses

Expenses exceeded revenue in 2025 due to intentional upfront investments in organizational setup, delivery capacity, and proposal development during this foundational year.

## Financial Posture

The Ridgeline Collective operates with a long-term perspective on financial sustainability. Our approach emphasizes:

- **Responsible early investment:** Establishing systems, capabilities, and relationships before pursuing scale.
- **Fair and transparent compensation:** Ensuring collaborators receive compensation equitably for their contributions.
- **Reinvestment in capacity:** Prioritizing learning design, facilitation skill, and durable assets over short-term surplus.

This posture allows Ridgeline to grow deliberately, absorb early-stage costs responsibly, and remain selective in future engagements.

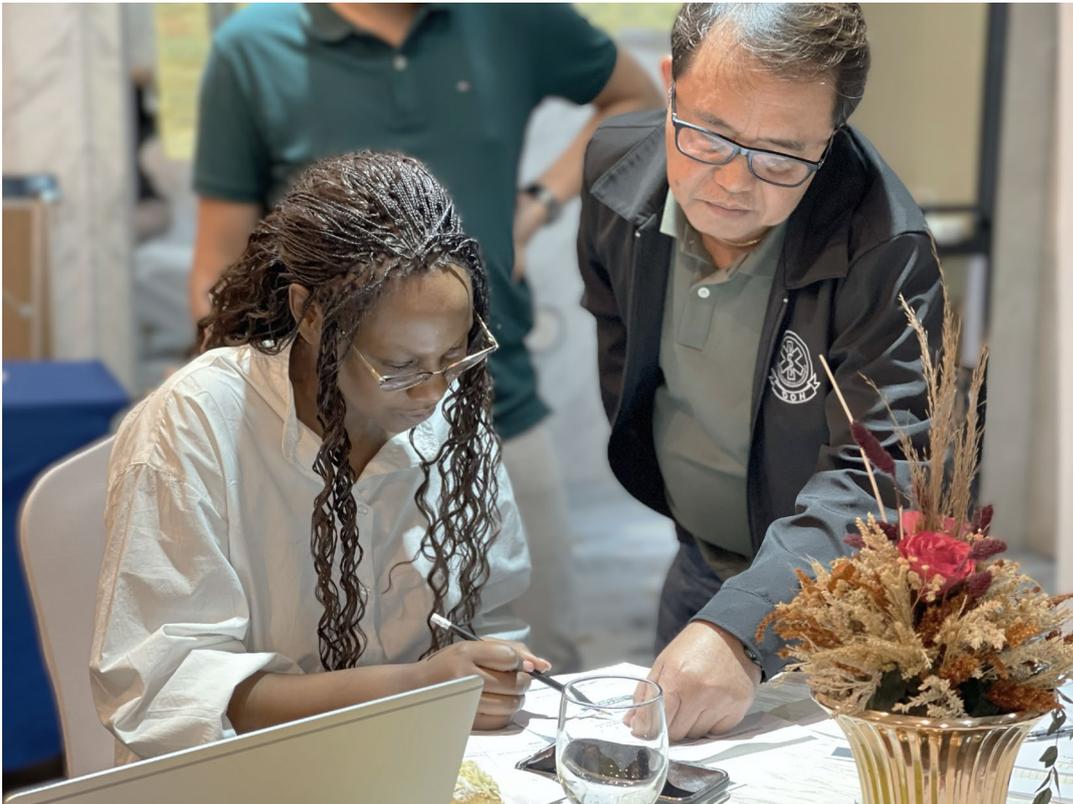
*The organization carries no external debt.*

*Detailed financial information is shared directly with funders and partners, as appropriate.*



## What We Learned This Year

2025 was a year of learning through practice. As our first year of operations, it clarified not only what The Ridgeline Collective does well, but how we must work to do it with integrity.



### **Facilitation is not an accessory to technical work**

We affirmed that technical expertise alone does not produce shared understanding or effective action. Facilitation creates the conditions in which expertise can be examined, integrated, and used. Treating facilitation as a professional skill—rather than a soft add-on—materially improves learning and decision-making.

### **Tools work best when they follow thinking**

Digital tools and frameworks can support clarity and efficiency after collective sense-making. Leading with tools too early can narrow discussion and suppress judgment. Designing for human reasoning first, with tools used to consolidate outcomes, consistently led to better engagement and decisions.

**Training of Trainers must build judgment, not replication**

Effective cascade delivery depends less on faithful reproduction of materials and more on facilitators' ability to understand intent, adapt to context, and manage group dynamics. Treating Training of Trainers as a learning process—grounded in practice, feedback, and reflection—builds far more durable capacity.

**Networks outperform scale at this stage**

A small organization can deliver complex work when it connects with the right people. Working through trusted collaborators allowed Ridgeline to draw on deep expertise without loss of coherence or quality. This reinforced our commitment to networked growth over rapid headcount expansion.

**The Ridgeline is not a proposal mill**

Pursuing many proposals in parallel is not how The Ridgeline Collective does its best work. Applying broadly spreads our attention thin and risks generic positioning. Our strongest work instead came from building relationships: understanding an organization's priorities and exploring where our facilitation-centered approach genuinely fits. Going forward, we will pursue proposals selectively, as part of deeper conversations, to protect quality and focus our craft.

**Early investment in foundations matters**

Spending time and resources on systems, documentation, and shared ways of working before scaling proved essential. Codifying practice while it is still close to lived experience strengthens quality and makes future growth more sustainable.



### *The next ridgeline*

As we move into 2026, The Ridgeline Collective aims to deepen its craft rather than expand its footprint. Our direction comes from practice: clarity emerges from doing fewer things well, not more things quickly.

### **What we are deepening**

We will continue to strengthen facilitation as a professional craft, making our tacit practice more explicit, teachable, and transferable. This includes refining facilitation frameworks, guidance, and train-the-trainer approaches that support sound judgment in complex, real-world settings. Our emphasis remains on learning through practice, not presentation.

### **What we are refining**

In 2026, we will invest further in turning lived work into durable learning assets—facilitator manuals, reusable curricula, implementation guidance, and publishable resources that can travel beyond individual engagements. Codifying practice is central to sustaining quality and extending impact without losing coherence.

### **The partnerships we are seeking**

We are seeking partnerships grounded in shared inquiry and mutual respect, relationships where learning, facilitation, and delivery evolve together. We work best with organizations and individuals willing to invest time in understanding context, clarifying purpose, and shaping work collaboratively. Our network-based model will remain the primary way we extend capacity.

**What we are not chasing**

We are not pursuing growth for its own sake, nor are we seeking to become a generalist consulting firm. We will continue to be selective about proposals, cautious about overextension, and disciplined about protecting the quality of our work. Scale, when it comes, will follow clarity—not precede it.

*Together, these choices reflect the next Ridgeline:*

**Fewer projects**

**Clearer edges**

**Stronger identity**

**Work designed to last**

## Closing Note

As we close our first year of operations, we reflect that meaningful learning takes time, attention, and care. The Ridgeline Collective exists to support people to think together more clearly in complex situations, and to do so with curiosity and connection. We move forward committed to focusing our efforts, strengthening our craft through practice, and building relationships that allow learning to translate into thoughtful action. That is our work. That is our destination.