



A LETTER FROM THE RIDGELINE

2026 Quarter Two

From the Managing Director

At the beginning of this year, we set ourselves a strategic direction: **expand the Ridgeline network**. We imagined this direction as meeting new collaborators, strengthening relationships, and finding opportunities to work together. In this direction, Quarter Two proved successful.

What we did not expect was that the quarter would remind us of something more fundamental: **Learning expands through connection.**

It expands not only through ideas, but through relationships themselves. In spaces where people share experience, challenge assumptions, and construct new perspectives together, there, the learning expands.

There are moments on a ridgeline when the path opens upon a clearing. You pause, look back at the path, then ahead and realize the landscape is greater than you imagined, your eyes having been glued to the ground, fenced in by the trees. This quarter felt like one of those moments.

Across collaborations with ECHO Institute, WHO Academy, WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence, and colleagues throughout the global public health and learning communities, our perspective on learning expanded. We found ourselves asking not only *how people learn*, but *how relationships themselves become part of the learning process*. In this letter, we reflect on what that means for our work.

—Matthew Myers Griffith, PhD

When Learning Connects

Relationships Become Collaborations

In our previous letter, we reflected on a new connection formed during a networking event in Singapore. This quarter, that relationship evolved. While our sectors and experiences differ, our philosophies of learning are aligned.

Conversations with WDHB, Inc. have grown into opportunities for collaboration, bringing together complementary strengths in experiential learning, facilitation, leadership development, and public health to design immersive experiential learning programs for public health leaders.

This experience reminded us that meaningful collaboration rarely begins with a proposal. It begins with curiosity, trust, resonance, and the willingness to explore together. The strongest partnerships are not built quickly. They are cultivated.

Learning Happens Between People

The Global Health Security Conference in Kuala Lumpur offered a similar lesson. Like many conferences, it was rich with technical sessions, new guidance, and emerging ideas. Our most valuable learning, however, occurred elsewhere: in hallways, over tea, and in conversations with colleagues old and new.

Again and again, we heard a similar challenge: countries are navigating an expanding landscape of frameworks, guidance documents, and technical recommendations. The question is becoming less about what should be implemented and increasingly about how implementation actually happens.

That space between publication and practice is where The Ridgeline Collective chooses to work. The most affirming outcome of the conference was hearing multiple organizations and government representatives describe our niche in similar terms: not curriculum design alone, nor facilitation alone, but helping organizations move from frameworks, curricula, and guidance into practice.

Communities as Learning Programs

Our collaboration with the ECHO Institute, WHO Academy, and WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence continues to expand our perspective.

ECHO has demonstrated the power of communities of practice to support learning. Rather than treating learning as a series of isolated events, the model creates a community that learns together over time through challenges brought by participants.

What is becoming clear is that these communities are more than discussion forums: they are learning programs.

One challenge within the program is how to connect participant case discussions with the conceptual segments. Rather than treating those segments as lectures, we designed them as conceptual lenses through which participants could examine their own challenges. Short learning activities help participants see patterns within their own contexts before carrying those perspectives into discussions of real challenges brought by the group. Concepts are not delivered as answers but offered as tools for analyzing experience.

Seeing the community of practice itself as a deliberately designed learning journey opens new possibilities, not only for collaborative surveillance, but also for leadership development, mentoring, facilitation, and Field Epidemiology Training Programs.

And yet, another lesson is emerging through the collaborative surveillance project itself.

The work brings together distinct forms of expertise. The WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence contributes technical expertise in collaborative surveillance. ECHO Institute contributes its model for communities of practice. WHO Academy brings expertise in learning quality. The Ridgeline Collective contributes to learning design and facilitation guidance.

This way of working reaffirms something important: technical expertise and learning expertise are distinct, and both are necessary. We often see technical experts expected to design learning. Rarely do we ask learning specialists to develop technical guidance. Yet learning, like epidemiology, is a discipline requiring its own expertise. Bringing these perspectives together produces something stronger than any one organization could develop independently: a program that is both technically and pedagogically robust.

What This Means

Across these experiences, a consistent pattern emerged:

Learning grows through relationships; develops when people think together; strengthens when communities continue beyond individual sessions; and expands when diverse perspectives and expertise interact.

This insight urges a shift in how we design learning:

- From networks to communities
- From collaboration as coordination to collaboration as learning
- From sharing expertise to creating conditions where expertise can interact

These distinctions are subtle; yet they reshape how we approach learning.

Learning Along the Ridgeline

The ridgeline is more than an opening to see farther: it is a place where paths and their walkers come together.

This quarter reminded us that our work is shaped by the ideas we encounter as much as it is by the people with whom we explore them.

We look forward to continuing this walk with partners, collaborators, and the growing Ridgeline community.

If these reflections resonate with you, we welcome the connection.

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