

Turning Ideas into Impact

Webinar Companion Guide—Part 1

Introduction

The **Turning Ideas into Impact** (Part 1 of 2) webinar highlights how Community Action Agencies (CAAs) can create the conditions for innovation to thrive by establishing innovation as an organizational value, aligning resources, and forming strategic partnerships. This companion guide is designed for executive leaders, program directors, managers, and emerging leaders within CAAs. It will help your team prepare for the design and implementation of innovative initiatives. Use this guide to reflect and discuss, revisit it as you navigate priorities, complete the activities collaboratively, and identify one actionable step to move your work forward.

1 ESTABLISHING INNOVATION AS AN ORGANIZATIONAL VALUE

Organizations that successfully innovate create environments where staff feel empowered to share ideas, test solutions, and learn from failure. Leadership plays a critical role in modeling openness, curiosity, and adaptability.

KEY ACTIONS

- ✓ Define what innovation means for your agency
- ✓ Encourage staff at all levels to contribute ideas
- ✓ Normalize learning from challenges and setbacks
- ✓ Identify internal champions to lead innovative efforts

SIGNS OF INNOVATIVE ORGANIZATIONS

- *Staff feel safe sharing new ideas*
- *Leadership supports experimentation*
- *Learning is prioritized over perfection*
- *Cross-team collaboration is common*



ACTIVITY 1 Reflection Assessment

Instructions: Reflect individually or discuss as a team.

1. What behaviors are currently rewarded in your organization?

2. How does your organization respond to failure?

3. Where do opportunities exist to encourage more innovation?

NEXT STEP: Identify **one action** you can take in the next 30 days to prioritize and pursue innovation in your organization.

2 LEVERAGING RESOURCES STRATEGICALLY

Innovation is not always about new funding; it is about using what you already have more effectively. By aligning existing resources, agencies can unlock new opportunities without overextending capacity.

KEY ACTIONS

- ✓ Inventory current funding, staffing, and community assets
- ✓ Identify underutilized or misaligned resources
- ✓ Explore opportunities to leverage funding streams
- ✓ Align resources with priority innovation goals

THINK BEYOND FUNDING

Innovation resources include:

- *Staff skills and lived experience*
- *Community knowledge and networks*
- *Data and technology*
- *Existing partnerships*



ACTIVITY 2 Resource Mapping Exercise

INSTRUCTIONS: Complete the table below to identify resources to support innovation.

RESOURCE TYPE	How is this resource currently being used?	How can this resource be used in a new or different way?	What gap can this resource help address?
FUNDING			
STAFF			
VOLUNTEERS			
PARTNERSHIPS			
BUILDINGS AND OFFICE SPACE			
VEHICLES			
EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES			

NEXT STEP: Identify one **resource shift** or **alignment opportunity** to explore.

3 BUILDING COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

No single organization can solve complex challenges alone. Cross-sector partnerships allow agencies to expand their reach, share expertise, and co-create solutions that better serve communities.

KEY ACTIONS

- ✓ Identify partners across sectors (education, workforce, healthcare, private sector)
- ✓ Establish shared goals and outcomes
- ✓ Clarify roles and expectations early
- ✓ Build trust through consistent communication



ELEMENTS OF A STRONG PARTNERSHIP

- *Shared vision and goals*
- *Mutual benefits*
- *Clear communication*
- *Accountability and trust*

ACTIVITY 3 Partnership Mapping Exercise

INSTRUCTIONS: Identify *current partners* to support innovation.

CURRENT PARTNERS SUPPORTING INNOVATION	What value does this partner bring?	What value do you offer in return?

ACTIVITY 3 Partnership Mapping Exercise (continued)

INSTRUCTIONS: Identify *potential new partners* to support innovation.

POTENTIAL PARTNERS SUPPORTING INNOVATION	What value would this partner bring?	What value would you offer in return?

NEXT STEP: Reach out to **one potential partner** to explore collaboration.

Conclusion

Establishing innovation as an organizational value, aligning resources, and strengthening partnerships creates the infrastructure needed for successful implementation. The **Turning Ideas into Impact** (Part 2 of 2) Webinar Companion Guide will support your next steps—guiding you through the design, implementation, evaluation, and sustainability of an innovative initiative. Use the insights and reflections from Part 1 to inform and strengthen your work as you move forward.



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