

# Turning Ideas into **Impact**

## FROM IDEAS TO **IMPACT** IN COMMUNITY ACTION AGENCIES

This Webinar Companion Guide for **Turning Ideas into Impact** (Part 2 of 2) builds on the readiness work from Part 1. It focuses on how Community Action Agencies (CAAs) can turn innovative ideas into measurable, sustainable outcomes by intentionally designing initiatives, implementing them effectively, evaluating impact, and planning for sustainability and scale. It is designed for CAA teams who are ready to move from planning to action. This guide can be used during the webinar to draft or refine one initiative, then used as a working document after the webinar to confirm roles, set milestones, schedule check-ins, and track progress as you adapt and learn.

### 1. DESIGNING INNOVATIVE INITIATIVES

Strong design is the bridge between ideas and impact. Effective initiatives are grounded in community needs, informed by data, and guided by a clear theory of change.

#### Key Actions

- Define the problem clearly using data and community input
- Engage participants in co-design
- Develop a clear theory of change
- Start small with pilot efforts

#### DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. Center community voice
2. Use data to inform decisions
3. Focus on outcomes, not just activities
4. Test before scaling

## ACTIVITY 1

# INITIATIVE DESIGN WORKSHEET

**STEP 1:** Draft your **innovation statement**.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

TARGET POPULATION

PROPOSED SOLUTION

**STEP 2:** Share your draft with a colleague or partner for feedback.

## 2. IMPLEMENTING WITH ADAPTABILITY

Implementation requires both structure and flexibility. Even the best plans must evolve in response to real-world conditions, feedback, and emerging data.

### Key Actions

- Develop a clear implementation plan (timeline, roles, milestones)
- Establish regular check-ins and feedback loops
- Collect input from staff and participants
- Adjust strategies as needed

### ADAPTIVE IMPLEMENTATION TIPS

1. Expect change and plan for it
2. Use small tests to reduce risk
3. Document what works (and what doesn't)
4. Keep communication open across teams

## ACTIVITY 2

# IMPLEMENTATION PLANNING

**STEP 1:** Outline your approach.

KEY MILESTONES			
ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES			
FEEDBACK METHODS (SURVEYS, MEETINGS, ETC.)			
POTENTIAL RISKS AND MITIGATION STRATEGIES			

**STEP 2:** Identify one **early implementation milestone** to achieve within 60 days.

## 3. EVALUATING FOR MEASURABLE IMPACT

Evaluation helps you understand whether your innovation is working and how it can improve. It also strengthens accountability and supports future funding and scaling opportunities.

### Key Actions

- Define success metrics early
- Track both outputs and outcomes
- Use qualitative and quantitative data
- Share findings with stakeholders



### WHAT TO MEASURE

1. Participation and engagement
2. Changes in knowledge or behavior
3. Economic mobility outcomes
4. System-level impact

## ACTIVITY 3

# EVALUATION PLANNING WORKSHEET

**STEP 1:** Begin defining your evaluation approach.

GOAL	INDICATOR	DATA SOURCE	FREQUENCY	OWNER

**STEP 2:** Select **2–3 priority indicators** to begin tracking.

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## 4. SUSTAINING AND SCALING INNOVATION

Sustainability ensures that successful innovations continue to benefit communities over time. Scaling allows you to expand impact while maintaining effectiveness.

### Key Actions

- Identify long-term funding strategies
- Align initiatives with organizational priorities
- Document lessons learned
- Build internal capacity for growth



### SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

1. Diversify funding sources
2. Integrate into core programs
3. Build staff capacity
4. Advocate for supportive policies

### ACTIVITY 4

## SUSTAINABILITY PLANNING

**STEP 1:** Reflect on long-term viability.

WHAT RESOURCES ARE  
NEEDED TO SUSTAIN  
THIS INITIATIVE?

WHAT PARTNERSHIPS  
WILL SUPPORT  
GROWTH?

WHAT ELEMENTS MUST  
REMAIN CONSISTENT  
WHEN SCALING?

**STEP 2:** Identify one **sustainability action** to begin with in the next 90 days.

## CONCLUSION

Designing, implementing, evaluating, and sustaining innovative initiatives requires intention, adaptability, and collaboration. Use this guide to carry the work forward after the webinar to document decisions, track indicators, review lessons learned and adjust your approach, so your initiative continues to advance economic mobility over time.

# INNOVATION IN ACTION



**Community Action Marin**, located in the northwestern San Francisco Bay Area, has responded to the rapidly rising cost of living in Marin County by using data-informed strategies to identify needs and create innovative solutions. They collected and analyzed data from the Community Needs Assessment, their "Crisis to Thriving" assessment, and targeted surveys and questionnaires to identify emerging trends and top community priorities. Using these insights, Community Action Marin identified common themes connected to its strategic priorities, and piloted new initiatives within their tax assistance, energy assistance, and workforce development programs. These innovative pilots helped foster continuous learning through both setbacks and successes. Learn more about Community Action Marin's Economic Mobility initiatives [here](#).

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