PATH TO PUBLIC INNOVATION PLAYBOOK

METHOD TO DEVELOP BOLD INNOVATION FOR CITY HALL

PRESENTED BY

JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY | BLOOMBERG Center for Public Innovation

FALL 2024

The **Path to Public Innovation** has been informed by the experiences and expertise of the Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Team (i-team) program, which is part of the organization's global Government Innovation portfolio. To date, the Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Team (i-team) program has reached 83 cities across nine countries and four continents – representing more than 65 million residents – and inspired thousands of public sector organizations to embrace innovation systems and practices.

INTRODUCTION TO PUBLIC INNOVATION

Community riverfront activation in Memphis, TN

PHOTO CREDIT: MEMPHIS RIVER PARKS PARTNERSHIP

PUBLIC INNOVATION AND THE FOUNDATION OF INNOVATION TEAMS

Cities are uniquely positioned to innovate and transform lives but face many barriers to developing and implementing solutions to tough challenges. City governments are not always organized to support innovation, especially when it comes to addressing complex, systemic issues – such as affordable housing, poverty reduction, climate action, or customer service – that are the shared responsibility of multiple agencies or even multiple levels of government. Leaders and public servants want to develop, deliver, and sustain new ideas that make lives better, but lack key resources: standard management and engagement strategies to overcome department silos, human capital, organizational capacity, or financial resources to take on bold ideas. A tension exists between "putting out fires" while managing day-to-day responsibilities and finding the time and space needed to think, plan, and launch new solutions. On any given day, the incentives to maintain the status quo or settle for incremental change can seem to outweigh the motivation to experiment and try new things.

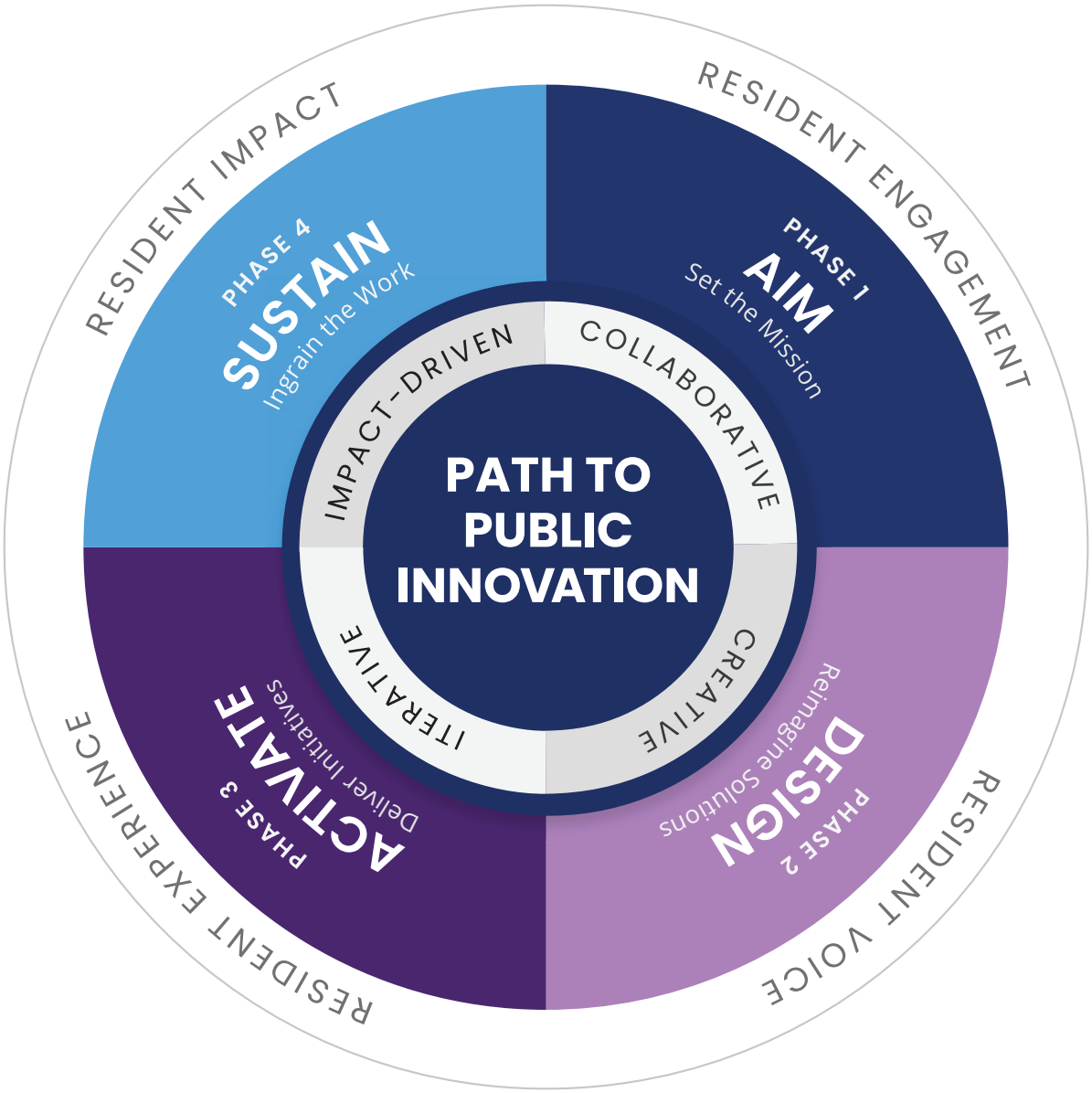
The Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins drives innovation in local government by marrying cutting-edge practice with world-class research. Together with public servants and government innovators around the world, the Center helps transform the culture in municipal management, deliver exceptional results, and deepen trust in public service worldwide.

Over the last decade, governments have begun to embrace public innovation as a critical component of solving the most challenging problems facing cities. As the field of public innovation continues to evolve worldwide, the Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Teams (i-teams) program builds the problem-solving capacity of cities by positioning dedicated teams inside city halls to address mayoral priorities using human-centered design and problem-solving methods. Launched in 2012, the program advances the Bloomberg Philanthropies Government Innovation's mission to help cities bring bold ideas to life and spread proven solutions to cities around the world. The model is rooted in successful approaches used by many different governments, including the teams from Mayor Michael Bloomberg's administration who went on to accomplish pathbreaking anti-poverty, sustainability, and efficiency agendas in New York City.

Now delivered in collaboration with the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University (BCPI), the i-teams program deploys public innovation approaches to address cities' greatest challenges and supports them in developing creative solutions and driving implementation of initiatives that improve lives.

ABOUT THE PATH TO PUBLIC INNOVATION

The Path to Public Innovation illustrates the methods and mindsets required to unlock innovation for the public sector. It enables leaders to understand opportunities for impact and deliver ambitious plans to achieve it. Using the Path to Public Innovation, public sector leaders improve resident outcomes, promote trust in government, and deliver systems-level change. Cities across the world have successfully implemented this innovation model, and many other cities have borrowed and adapted the model in the creation of innovation labs, agencies, partnerships, and more.



ABOUT THE PLAYBOOK

How to Use This Resource

The Playbook is a comprehensive guide for city leaders and practitioners who want to spark or strengthen impact-driven and resident-informed innovation practices in their cities. The Playbook is designed to support cities in tackling their toughest challenges to deliver inclusive and equitable results for residents. This edition of the Playbook includes lessons from teams in more than a dozen countries and can be used by cities that are building innovation capacity in many forms.

The Playbook offers an introduction followed by a roadmap, illustrative examples, and resources across four phases of innovation:

Introduction to Public Innovation

Learn about the results the Path to Public Innovation methodology has produced and the commitments, mindsets, and skillsets i-teams need to support their innovation practice.

PHASE 1

AIM: Set the Mission

Establish an Ambitious Impactful Mission (AIM) to prioritize resources, focus energy, and communicate the desired impact for residents.

PHASE 2

Design: Reimagine Solutions

Use design research, data analysis, and creative ideation methods to deeply understand the problems residents face, co-create solutions, and build a portfolio of initiatives.

PHASE 3

Activate: Deliver Initiatives

Develop a robust portfolio of ideas to achieve impact. Bring ideas to life by prototyping, piloting, and scaling initiatives using proven delivery techniques.

PHASE 4

Sustain: Ingrain the Work

Keep what works while adapting to an evolving context, with a strategic focus on data, outcomes, and relationships; continuously engaging residents and city staff; and facilitating a culture of innovation.

The Playbook is a flexible resource meant to support an i-team throughout their work. It may be read end-to-end, referenced for guidance on specific phases of the work, or used as an accompaniment to training on public innovation methods. While it was created to support cities participating in the Bloomberg Philanthropies Innovation Teams (i-teams) Program, the Path to Public Innovation can readily support public innovation practitioners and others interested in learning about this tested approach to public innovation.

THE CASE FOR PUBLIC INNOVATION

Home to more than half of the world's population, cities are at the forefront of addressing society's greatest challenges, often with limited resources and support. The nature of these challenges – complex, long-term, and large-scale – requires that city leaders build innovation capacity.

While innovation has long been practiced in the private sector, in the past it was not often used in the public sector. Historically, governments that did invest in innovation capacity had to contend with a global trend toward outsourcing key government research and learning functions.[1] Local governments were also incentivized to design structures and solutions that prioritized stability, even at the cost of reduced responsiveness to changing resident needs.

Today, governments increasingly embed innovation in public service delivery. This practice provides a critical bridge between cities' limited resources and jurisdiction, and the urgent need for solutions to increasingly complex challenges like climate risk, public health disparities, and economic inequality. Because these challenges are dynamic, innovation capacity is essential to the day-to-day work of government.

Throughout the world, centering innovation has led to tremendous outcomes for residents.

Faced with economically and environmentally damaging congestion and air pollution, **London, England**, made bold investments in public transport, road and bridge improvement, and walking and cycling infrastructure. City leaders paired sustainable travel incentives with a congestion charge zone, a model that is now being implemented in major cities around the world.

Tel Aviv, Israel, tackled a cost-of-living crisis for young families by developing a digital platform called DigiTaf, which curated affordable children's services and activities. This program successfully enrolled over 74% of children three years old and younger.

Building innovation capacity is crucial to improving the quality of life for residents from varying backgrounds and experiences, especially underinvested and underrepresented communities.

1 Mariana Mazzucato and Rosie Collington, *The Big Con: How the Consulting Industry Weakens Our Business, Infantilizes Our Governments, and Warps Our Economies*, (New York: Penguin Random House, 2023).

LABiFOR Innovation Lab team and colleagues in Fortaleza, Brazil

What Does Innovation Capacity Look Like in Cities?

Innovation capacity can vary depending on city size, structure, resources, and budget. It can include cross-departmental staff organizing around a specific priority, a chief innovation officer, or a dedicated i-team. Some cities have taken steps to build innovation capacity by supporting open innovation approaches in which they gather and fund ideas from front-line employees, residents, or local businesses to solve seemingly intractable problems.

Innovation Teams supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies focus on improving the lives of residents, and ultimately delivering transformational change, by engaging city stakeholders in a collaborative innovation process. The impact of these efforts has been significant, with i-teams delivering measurable progress in areas as diverse as public safety, small business growth, street maintenance, vaccination distribution, blight remediation, and more.

AS OF 2024, INNOVATION TEAMS HAVE LAUNCHED MORE THAN 500 INITIATIVES, ENGAGED TENS OF THOUSANDS OF RESIDENTS IN PROGRAM AND POLICY DESIGN, AND TRAINED THOUSANDS OF CIVIL SERVANTS WITHIN THEIR CITY HALLS.

KEY SKILLS AND MINDSETS FOR SUCCESS

The Path to Public Innovation brings together method and mindset, enabling cities to tackle ambitious missions. This work is both exhilarating and challenging. The following skills and ways of working are critical to an i-team and are explored throughout the phases of the Playbook.

Five Key Skills

1

Civic Design
The ability to use and apply intentional civic design processes including research, ideation, and prototyping, with key stakeholders and community members centered in the process. This skill allows i-teams to lead a co-design process to uncover new and bold solutions to what innovation leaders call "wicked" problems.

2

Data Analysis
The ability to understand, interpret, communicate, and analyze data to inform decision-making, strategies, and priorities. This skill enables i-teams to use existing and new data to drive impact.

3

Equity and Engagement in Design
The ability to apply an inclusive and equitable lens to the entire innovation journey, improving outcomes for all residents while centering the voices of those most impacted by and closest to a problem when designing solutions. This skill allows teams to navigate and shift power dynamics and to address the impacts of – and begin to change – inequitable structures.

4

Delivery and Change Management
The ability to manage timelines and budgets, facilitate and communicate progress for residents and city government, and produce results. This skill helps teams drive a culture of innovation inside the city, creating new ways of working and facilitating adoption of these practices over the long term.

5

Storytelling
The ability to understand audiences, make a compelling case for change, and articulate the value of initiatives in the innovation portfolio and innovation practices. Leveraging data, written communication, and direct engagement with stakeholders can help teams communicate impact of the work and build support both inside and outside of city government.

Five Key Innovation Mindsets

Mindsets describe the energy, basic assumptions, developed perspectives, and priorities that one brings to innovation work. They are a key factor in i-teams' impact and the experience of working on and within i-teams.

1 **Impact-driven**

Set measurable, clear, and ambitious goals to make positive change. An impact-driven mindset requires delivery, measurement to know what succeeds, and the drive to sustain what works.

2 **Creative**

Think, act, and create in new ways.

3 **Resident-centered**

Be curious about, empathize with, and share power with others, specifically city residents. This mindset is used to tackle problems that city residents want and need resolved.

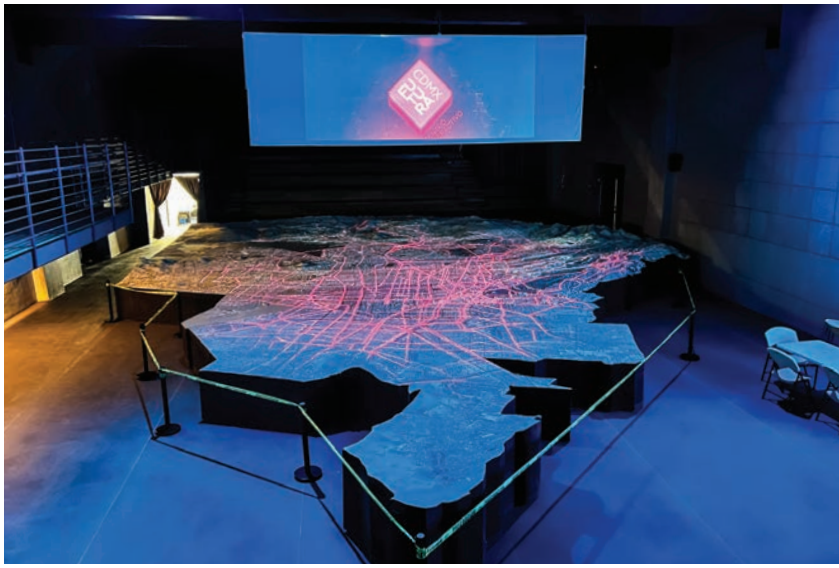
4 **Iterative**

Constantly improve initiatives and learn along the way. An iterative mindset abandons ideas of "perfection" and "completion" and instead highlights risk-taking and refinement.

5 **Collaborative**

See the value in other perspectives – whether from community members or other key stakeholders – and work together to develop solutions.

Art installation from youth research exercise in Reykjavík, Iceland



- Mayor's communications lead and spokesperson for #FreetownTheTreetown in Freetown, Sierra Leone (top)
- Preparing support for households in need in Istanbul, Turkey (left)
- Promoting digital technology in Mexico City, Mexico (right)

MAYORAL LEADERSHIP

Mayoral support is vital for ambitious public innovation initiatives to succeed. Mayors establish the tone and credibility needed for collaboration, laying the groundwork for a successful innovation effort and sparking a citywide culture of innovation.

Mayor Ekrem İmamoğlu of **Istanbul, Turkey**, who participated in Bloomberg Philanthropies' Mayors Challenge, is an excellent example of what mayoral support looks like in practice. In 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, 25% of Istanbul households applied for social aid, but even after tripling its social-assistance budget, the city was not able to meet the demand. In response, the Mayor and his team worked together to create the Mayors Challenge-winning platform, *Pay It Forward*. This social-support platform anonymously matches people in need of financial assistance with those willing to provide it. In a time of crisis, Mayor İmamoğlu successfully worked with his team and external stakeholders to build this platform, bridge a political divide, foster solidarity among residents, and get support to residents who needed it most. He used his influence and position to drive support for this innovative effort to deliver vital assistance to residents.

Mayor Yvonne Aki-Sawyerr of **Freetown, Sierra Leone**, created the conditions for innovation in her city. Through *#FreetownTheTreetown*, communities are given monetary incentives to plant trees and help fund additional environmental restoration, driving climate action at the community level. This innovative and nontraditional approach to tackling climate change requires the constant support, expertise, and backing of the Mayor to drive progress and ensure accountability. She holds routine meetings for *#FreetownTheTreetown* during which she discusses progress and troubleshoots issues with her team. In these sessions, she works directly with the team to remove barriers and combat bureaucratic delays.

Mexico City, Mexico, Mayor Claudia Sheinbaum consistently promoted and prioritized digital technology to drive innovation and fight corruption. She spoke publicly about this commitment in her State of the City addresses and included the work in the city's Public Government Plan. By committing to innovation early in her term, Mayor Sheinbaum and her team successfully integrated digital innovation capacity into the city's systems and sustainability routines. They created the Digital Agency for Public Innovation, an agency that was sustained beyond her term and now has 150 staff members.

BEING PART OF THE I-TEAM COHORT HELPED US ACCELERATE CULTURE CHANGE...WE LEARNED TO SPEAK THE SAME LANGUAGE WHEN IT COMES TO IMPROVEMENT AND INNOVATION, AND TO APPLY THE TOOLSETS OF HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN, RAPID PROTOTYPING, LOW-COST/NO-COST TESTING, BEHAVIORAL ECONOMICS, RIGHT-SIZED PROBLEM SOLVING, DATA ANALYSIS, AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT. MAYOR GREG FISCHER

In **Louisville, KY**, Mayor Greg Fischer was a champion of data-informed practice and public innovation. He worked with his direct reports and departments to increase their digital literacy and problem-solving skills to help create and sustain a culture of innovation. Inspired by Mayor Fischer's commitment to building these skills, Louisville expanded these trainings – and thus its innovation capacity – to the entire city workforce.

Key Roles the Mayor Plays

- Raising ambition to tackle complex, large-scale problems
- Fostering conditions for innovation by emphasizing the need for collaboration and engagement
- Communicating with data and stories
- Creating conditions for sustainability and growth, including spreading innovation inside city hall and dedicating resources to try new things, fail and learn

TEAM COMPOSITION AND ROLES

The Path to Public Innovation emphasizes building in-house innovation capacity by creating trusted, agile teams that work across agencies to address high-priority challenges. An i-team reports directly to the mayor and includes key roles such as team director, designer, and project manager.

Innovation Team Directors are senior city leaders with experience across different sectors and act as the core champions of an i-team and the innovation portfolio. Effective directors enable the i-team to generate new ideas and solve problems; direct activities that generate impact and address resident needs; and facilitate collaboration across departments to drive project development and implementation.

Innovation Team Civic Designers play a central role in deploying design-based innovation approaches that support their teams, leaders in city halls, city practitioners across departments, and communities. They are responsible for driving a rigorous innovation process, including research, data synthesis, idea generation, and prototyping.

Innovation Team Data Analysts have an essential role in today's technological and data-driven cities. They gather, analyze, and organize qualitative and quantitative data so the i-team can develop new insights into problems and measure initiative results.

Innovation Team Project Managers are accountable for shepherding projects through delivery with partners, providing status tracking, identifying next steps, and staying alert to risks or roadblocks as they emerge. This support is crucial for keeping key stakeholders informed and engaged as well as building momentum within the i-team.

Toolkit

See the Playbook Toolkit for Sample Job Descriptions.

Responsive Team Compositions

Each i-team is set up to best meet the needs of its specific city. In all cases, strong interdisciplinary teams strive to bring together diverse perspectives, skill sets, and ways of working. Consider these additional roles past i-teams have included while shaping a team:

- Behavioral scientists or behavioral economists to offer insight into the role of human behavior in solving public problems, as well as opportunities to apply academic evidence
- Community engagement liaisons or community organizers to communicate directly with residents about their concerns and ideas and to build trust between government and residents
- Digital engineers and programmers to build comprehensive and usable digital infrastructure
- Ethnographers to use qualitative methods to engage residents and identify trends
- Graphic designers and communication specialists to build narratives and share stories in creative and diverse ways
- Artists to foster creativity, community building, and resident engagement
- User experience/user interface designers to support resident engagement and build responsive digital solutions
- Equity, diversity, inclusion and/or belonging specialists or designers to apply an equity lens to the work

When the i-teams program began, it was less common to see dedicated staff positions for designers, data scientists, or community liaisons. These roles are more prevalent today and are considered critical capacities in an i-team whenever resources are available.

Cross-disciplinary team members collaborate in Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Building Balanced Teams

When building a balanced team, consider seeking out individuals who:

- have experience implementing new solutions and measuring impact.
- can maintain strong relationships with stakeholders.
- are interested in teaching and sharing competencies.
- apply a diverse, inclusive and equitable lens to their problem-solving approaches.

INNOVATION TEAM COMPOSITION EXAMPLES

Durham, NC

The i-team prioritized improving economic opportunity outcomes for justice-involved residents. To ensure they understood the challenges first-hand, they included a justice-involved community member as part of their paid, formal team. The community member's experiences helped shape the team's work, helping more than 7,600 Durham residents move towards restoring their driver's licenses.

Los Angeles, CA

The i-team featured project managers, designers, and data analysts. The team also relied on a partnership with a local design school for additional design support as well as a partnership with behavioral science experts. Together, this team offered diverse expertise and methodologies which allowed them to quickly gain the respect and trust of their colleagues. Over time, the team also partnered with agencies to have city staff with specific subject matter expertise seconded to the team.

Syracuse, NY

The i-team leveraged local university resources (e.g., student interns and subject matter experts) to build an effective team. Situated near a major university with a public service and administration school, this relationship advanced its research and data capabilities.

Tel Aviv, Israel

The i-team leveraged relationships with designers at the Bezalel Academy of Arts and Design to access key services and bring on civic designers, accelerating the i-team's innovation practice capabilities. This engagement helped advance the delivery of a new user-centric product adopted by residents.

Partner Role Profiles

The i-team works hard, moves quickly, and collaborates throughout the process with their governmental and non-governmental partners, especially their initiative sponsors and lead implementers.

In addition to those project leadership and management roles, some partners provide seconded staff to add specific technical expertise or partnership capacity.

For partnerships, the i-team takes the lead in clarifying roles and responsibilities. Setting expectations with key partners is essential to building productive working relationships with the departments and agencies that ultimately sustain the work.

Sponsors are agency or department leaders within city hall, such as a deputy mayor, director, or commissioner, who are accountable to the mayor for successful implementation of initiatives developed through the Path to Public Innovation. Sponsors are closely involved with the work and act as the primary point of contact to the mayor, actively engaging them with consistent updates. In **Toronto, Canada**, for example, the Deputy City Manager was charged with managing community and social services and served as a source of support and a liaison between the Mayor and the i-team as they worked to develop an online payment platform for residents.

Lead Implementers are responsible for day-to-day implementation and oversight of a new initiative. They establish routines to keep the sponsor informed of progress and ensure that the implementation team is reaching milestones on schedule. In **Memphis, TN**, for example, a manager in the Department of Public Works served as the lead in implementing a city-wide survey to catalog all vacant properties.

■ Partnership presentation in Baltimore, MD

BUILDING SUPPORT FOR THE INNOVATION TEAM

Acting as in-house innovation specialists within city hall, i-team members work with senior leaders, city departments, civil society, and private sector partners to learn about challenges facing cities and to design and implement initiatives to tackle the city's priority challenges. The key to success in the Path to Public Innovation is collaboration at every level.

Engaging Key Stakeholders

Many i-team directors credit their success to first building a broad base of support both inside and outside of city hall. To effectively tackle complex issues and build trust, i-teams collaborate with communities, residents, and institutions that have historically received underinvestment and are often most affected by a problem.

Department leaders within a city government may not immediately understand and embrace the i-team's approach, and some may view the i-team as an imposition or even a threat. An early focus for the i-team is fostering trust by listening deeply to potential partners, explaining the team's role, and building enthusiasm for the team's approach. This engagement and trust-building with stakeholders is critical to success in the innovation process.

> **THE SUCCESS OF YOUR PROJECT DEPENDS ON SUCCESSFULLY INTRODUCING THE I-TEAM. THE DEPARTMENTS HAVE TO SEE YOU AS A MEMBER OF THEIR TEAM AND NOT AS SOMEONE WHO IS THERE TO 'UNCOVER' ANYTHING, ADD UNNECESSARY WORK, ETC. THEY HAVE TO KNOW THAT YOU ARE 100% THERE TO SUPPORT THEM AND DRIVE THE PROJECT. THE DEPARTMENTS SHOULD FEEL AS THOUGH THIS IS AN OPPORTUNITY FOR THEM TO DO SOMETHING BIGGER THAN THEIR DAY-TO-DAY FUNCTIONS.** I-TEAM DIRECTOR

Innovation Teams find it helpful to emphasize their role as in-house innovation specialists, partners, and facilitators to senior leaders and other departments. They clearly communicate that they are not managed by and do not manage the departments they support, but rather complement existing expertise and institutional capacity and help transform ideas into actionable projects and deliver on mayoral priorities.

The director of the i-team is committed to spending significant time at the outset engaging with department heads, chiefs of staff, deputy mayors, city council leaders, and community representatives. This can be accomplished in a series of one-on-one meetings, small groups, or larger strategy meetings.

To facilitate engagement, i-teams often build a presentation that explains the team's purpose, goals, and process to potential partners. Potential points to cover include the following tenets of the work. The i-team:

- facilitates and coaches partners through a design and delivery process.
- applies an inclusion and equity lens to the work throughout.
- reports to the mayor and acts at times as an extension of the mayor's office.
- helps partners accomplish ambitious goals on high-priority challenges.
- serves as an in-house innovation consultancy.
- helps the work progress to action but does not "own" implementation.
- supports partners throughout, from understanding the root causes of a problem to implementing the solution designed to address it.
- focuses on impact for residents.
- collects data and talks with staff to understand what has been tried in the past and the historical context of the challenge.
- collaborates and co-designs with stakeholders inside and outside city hall.

Beyond this initial round of engagement, the director identifies the people the i-team works with and engages with them thoughtfully and consistently. This can help ensure continued excitement and connection to the work as the team launches initiatives and builds a robust innovation strategy.

Community co-design session in Ottawa, Canada

The Role of Trust with Residents

The Path to Public Innovation, which involves risk-taking, productive tensions, and creative thinking, requires resident trust to co-design truly impactful solutions. In many cities, a part of the i-team work is to build that trust. In working toward building trust with residents, i-teams consider the following questions their partners might ask of them:

- Does the organization have the capacity to follow through on what they say they will do?
- Does the organization care about me or are they only advancing their own agenda?
- Will they represent me and keep their word even when no one is watching?
- Are there unaddressed harms that have led to skeptical attitudes?
- Is agreement prioritized over risk-taking?
- How can the team extend trust to residents and other stakeholders? Is there an opportunity to showcase their expertise or prioritize transparency?

Toolkit

See the Playbook Toolkit for a deeper dive into sparking and sustaining trust.

GENERALLY, TRUST IN GOVERNMENT IS ON THE DECLINE.[2] HOWEVER, LOCAL GOVERNMENT IS MUCH MORE TRUSTED, WITH 67% OF AMERICANS TRUSTING THEIR LOCAL GOVERNMENT TO HANDLE LOCAL PROBLEMS.[3]

2 *2024 Edelman Trust Barometer*, (Edelman, January 2024), https://www.edelman.com/sites/g/files/aatuss191/files/2024-02/2024%20Edelman%20Trust%20Barometer%20Global%20Report_FINAL.pdf.
3 Jeffrey M. Jones, "Americans Trust Local Government Most, Congress Least," *Gallup News*, October 13, 2023, https://news.gallup.com/poll/512651/americans-trust-local-government-congress-least.aspx.

PHASE 1

AIM

SET THE MISSION

SET THE AIM

Cities face interconnected and deep-seated economic, social, and government service problems, often called wicked problems in the field of innovation. These formidable challenges must be matched by a mission-oriented vision of impact that catalyzes collaboration across departments, jurisdictions, and stakeholders. The Ambitious Impactful Mission (AIM) framework offers a structure for articulating a desired future state around a priority deeply felt by residents.[4] The AIM is the long-term, high-level, aspirational goal that motivates action within the city. It describes the desired future that the innovation initiatives orient toward.

TRADITIONAL PROBLEM SOLVING APPROACH	MISSION APPROACH
Begins in the present	Begins in the future
Project focus	Portfolio focus
Competitive funding	Collaborative funding
Top-down OR bottom-up	Top-down AND bottom-up
Governance as an expense	Governance as an investment
Innovation management	Mission management

4 The AIM was produced in collaboration with Christian Bason, former CEO of the Danish Design Centre.

Shaping an AIM

Throughout the innovation process – and specifically in the process of articulating an AIM – the i-team works closely with the mayor. Sometimes, the mayor identifies pressing priority areas based on problems experienced by city residents prior to the i-team's establishment. Other times, the i-team is tasked with researching and identifying wicked problems. To identify a systemic wicked problem and corresponding AIM, i-teams and mayors first consider:

1. **Administration priorities:** What are the mayor's major goals and ambitions for the city? Has the mayor made promises or commitments regarding cross-cutting issues experienced by residents? What problems are the most difficult to solve? Which issues require collaboration with multiple departments?

2. **Residents' priorities:** What long-standing problems raised by residents have yet to be addressed? Are there issues that community groups and/or organizers have raised? Consider engaging directly with residents to help identify priorities, using focus groups, co-design engagements, and listening sessions to get answers to these questions.

3. **Internal stakeholders' priorities:** Are there internal priorities that significantly affect the city's ability to deliver high-quality public services? What is the most critical priority for departments? Which priorities are most visible to residents? Which priorities might prompt or require collaboration between departments?

Cities create an AIM grounded in the needs and knowledge of residents, front-line workers, and other key stakeholders.

AIM development workshop in Baltimore, MD

In **London, England**, data showed the residents living in the Borough of Camden had experienced higher levels of income inequality and poverty than other city residents. Using a mission approach, Camden developed four missions:[5]

- By 2025, every young person has access to economic opportunity that enables them to be safe and secure.
- By 2030, those holding positions of power in Camden are as diverse as the Camden community – and the next generation is ready to follow.
- By 2030, everyone eats well every day with nutritious, affordable, sustainable food.
- By 2030, Camden's estates (public housing) and their neighborhoods are healthy and sustainable.

The creation of these AIMs enabled stakeholders to stay focused as they developed ideas and initiatives to reach these goals. As a result, the Mayor of London and Greater London Authority have adopted the plans and Camden has launched a portfolio of programs that have supported youth, families, and economic advancement in the Borough.

One way of facilitating bold thinking is by setting early and ambitious targets. While these may evolve in the design process, it is helpful at the outset to ground the design process in ambitious goals to move from more incremental to transformative thinking. To narrow down the list of possibilities, teams ask the following questions:

Is it forward-looking? When others read this statement, will they find it to be an inspirational and exciting vision that touches on a wide social issue, has deep resident impact, and incentivizes creativity?

Is it strategic? Is a bold direction made clear in the statement?

Is it measurable? Can measurements that clearly demonstrate impact be established?

Is it collaborative? Is the focus of the AIM broad enough to require collaboration across sectors, disciplines, community groups, and departments to holistically shape action?

Is it relevant? Is the AIM clearly connected to an important need/priority for the city and residents, particularly those who are historically underserved?

Is it large-scale? Is this mission substantial enough that it could take a decade or more to achieve?

Is it time-bound? Is a clear date for completion stated in the AIM?

5 "About," We Make Camden, https://www.wemakecamden.org.uk/about/.

The most successful i-teams focus on one or two AIMs at the outset. As the i-team and the mayor achieve their initial goals and notice emerging priorities, the team can move from one mission to the next. Past i-teams have chosen to prioritize an array of goals, including reducing street homelessness, decreasing violent crime, improving youth employment outcomes, and more.

Once an AIM is finalized, the next step is to communicate it to key stakeholders, including the public where appropriate. The i-team supports the mayor in sharing the mission within city government, providing talking points about why the priority was chosen and the role of the i-team.

Toolkit

See the Playbook Toolkit for detailed guidance on creating and refining an AIM.

Preparing for Design

By the end of **Phase 1 of the Path to Public Innovation**, the i-team completes the following key steps:

- ☑ **Engages Mayor and Leaders:** Helps the mayor and leaders understand their role in building support for innovation
- ☑ **Clarifies Roles and Responsibilities:** Understands the key roles and responsibilities of the i-team, its key partners, and the roles they play in advancing innovation
- ☑ **Develops a Mission Statement:** Collaborates to create a bold AIM for the innovation effort

Fulfilling these key steps prepares the team for the next phase of **Path to Public Innovation: Design**.

PHASE 2

DESIGN
REIMAGINE SOLUTIONS

After articulating an AIM, the Path to Public Innovation calls for i-teams to thoughtfully frame the problem and conduct in-depth research. After collecting and analyzing data and engaging key stakeholders, the i-team sees the problem in new ways and better understands residents' experiences. This deeper understanding lays the groundwork for bold, creative solutions that move the team closer to its long-term mission. This is the first of many opportunities in the Path to Public Innovation to engage residents who are most affected by the problem.

In this phase of the work, teams:

- observe and analyze to understand and frame the problem,
- conduct in-depth research to deeply understand the problem,
- synthesize what they've learned and reframe the problem, and
- embark on ideation to identify solutions that can make the biggest impact on the problem.

UNDERSTAND AND FRAME THE PROBLEM

The Path to Public Innovation emphasizes deep investigation of the problem because the way a systemic and complex problem is defined shapes possible solutions. Innovation Teams use the following groundwork tools to frame the problem. This initial framing effort helps teams focus on the drivers or root causes of the problem. The output of this work is a problem frame that the team thoroughly investigates through design research.

Groundwork Tools to Frame the Problem

Landscape scan: Conduct a preliminary scan of actions the city is currently taking to address the problem and what it has tried in the past, what community groups are doing to address the problem, and what peer cities have tried. While there is an opportunity later in the design phase to conduct in-depth interviews with city staff and counterparts in other cities, at this stage it is useful to have informal conversations with colleagues and conduct desk research to get a sense of the landscape, understand past efforts within the city, and build knowledge.

Process map: When the problem involves a complex system, like a permit approval process or residents' experience of accessing childcare benefits, a graphic representation of the current process can make it easier to spot aspects that require deeper understanding. A process map helps identify all the steps required in executing a service and the key players involved, with the aim of illuminating where the process is not working as effectively as it could.

Data inventory: Use existing city-produced data to better understand the problem the team is investigating. At this stage, it is important to understand what data exists and where there are data gaps. Investigate and assemble existing data and assess how accessible and useful it is in illustrating the problem.

Root cause analysis: Distilling the problem's root causes is a crucial part of the framing process. Start this process by writing down the problem, then brainstorm different causes. For each cause, continue to ask "why" until the question can't be answered further. Once the list of causes is complete, the team and stakeholders can then prioritize the most significant contributors.

Detailed stakeholder mapping: Identify individuals and groups who have an interest in the AIM and the problem, analyze their influence and interest, and explore how they are impacted by the problem. Once stakeholders are identified, i-teams can develop strategies to engage with each identified stakeholder group.

Toolkit
See the Playbook Toolkit for a data inventory template.

Problem Frame

After completing the groundwork, problem framing is the process for analyzing, understanding, and ultimately defining a problem or challenge. A problem frame succinctly captures the current state and enables the team to focus and set the direction and scope of the design research process.

A simple framing statement explains what the problem is, for whom it is a problem, and why it is a problem. Teams reframe the problem later, after conducting in-depth research with key stakeholders, particularly the residents most impacted by the problem.

A strong problem frame:

- identifies a problem that, if solved, makes meaningful progress on the AIM,
- provides direction for measuring impact and lifts up meaningful stories,
- describes which residents are impacted by the problem and specifies which communities the team is prioritizing in development of potential solutions, and
- shows how addressing the problem creates equitable outcomes for residents and improves trust within the community.

Toolkit

See the Playbook Toolkit for a problem frame template.

Celebration of a new program, developed with the i-team, focused on attracting HBCU students to city service in Washington, DC

Strategy and planning workshop in Syracuse, NY

In **Syracuse, NY**, the i-team's AIM was focused on significantly improving housing outcomes for residents. Through groundwork, the i-team narrowed the problem to strengthening housing stability – the *what*. By analyzing available data, the i-team identified *who* was being affected by housing instability: about 25% of Syracuse residents moved within a twelve-month period, and in some neighborhoods, that number was as high as 35%. This was double the national average, proving the urgency of the problem.

Lastly, the i-team identified *why* this is a problem: housing instability affects families' abilities to obtain basic necessities (e.g., food, clothing, and medicine) and has adverse effects on children's education (e.g., frequent school moves, higher rates of absenteeism, and lower test scores). By developing a clear problem frame, the entire i-team and its partners were aligned on *what* the problem is, *who* it most urgently affects, and *why* it is a problem.

DESIGN RESEARCH

After taking stock of the existing data and arriving at an initial problem frame and stakeholder map, i-teams conduct design research to build deeper understanding of people's experiences and test their framing of the problem.

The i-team's design research focuses on understanding the viewpoints of residents and engaging the key stakeholders identified during stakeholder mapping. Unlike other research approaches that emphasize neutrality and objectivity above all, design research requires the researcher to have a point of view on the facts and perspectives they gather.

DESIGN RESEARCH

- finds new opportunities for change
- makes sense of multiple sources of research data, including primary and secondary sources
- takes a position on the research
- includes qualitative and quantitative data

DESIGN RESEARCH IS NOT

- neutral
- generalizable
- exhaustive
- academic

Co-design session with students in Turku, Finland

Design Research Plan

To start the design research process, i-teams formulate a plan based on the problem frame to guide the research process. The research plan describes the "when, why, and how" of a team's activities for investigating the problem.

A quality research plan includes:

- research goals and objectives, listing the high-level questions to be answered during the research phase,
- team roles and responsibilities,
- assumptions the team holds and the ones they test during the research process,
- data collection methods, activities, and existing data that the team plans to use,
- data collection routines that include meticulous documentation of findings and makes connections across lines of inquiry,
- data cleaning and quality protocols (e.g., standardizing formats, validating entries, removing duplicates),
- a data safeguard plan that includes security procedures for collection, informed consent for adults and minors, and other protections for research participants that align with existing city policies,
- recruitment strategies that detail how the i-team selects and onboards research participants for interviews, focus groups, and/or surveys,
- a timeline for data collection, analysis, and synthesis, and
- a stakeholder engagement plan, including how many stakeholders will be engaged, and how the research results are shared with stakeholders.

Toolkit

See the Playbook Toolkit for a research plan template.

SAMPLE RESEARCH GOALS	
PROBLEM FRAME	**SAMPLE RESEARCH QUESTIONS**
Seattle, WA, is the engine of Washington state's booming economy, but local youth (*who*) are not currently ready to compete for the middle-wage and high-wage job openings (*what*) that are coming. 80% of the 740,000 jobs projected to open in Washington state from 2016 to 2021 are expected to be in positions that offer better pay and upward mobility than entry-level jobs. Most of these jobs will be filled by people with postsecondary training, but currently only about 31% of Washington high school students go on to earn a credential (*why*).	▪ What proportion of "good" jobs are being filled by local youth/young adults or imported talent? ▪ What are the characteristics of local youth/young adults who are not being hired into these jobs? ▪ What does the future of work mean for residents as employees? ▪ What do employers want and need for their future business needs? ▪ What does the future of work mean for residents as employers?
The Police Department in **Baltimore, MD**, (BPD) (*who*) does not have enough police officers or enough officers with ideal characteristics and competencies (*what*). This limits the department's ability to reduce violence (*why*). This project aims to improve the BPD's recruitment, hiring, and retention of officers so that BPD has the police force needed to provide public safety to all Baltimore residents.	▪ What traits and characteristics are most desirable in a BPD officer from the perspective of community members? What traits are most desirable by BPD? ▪ What are the current recruitment and hiring processes of the BPD? ▪ How do BPD applicants find their experience during the hiring process and to what extent does a negative experience lead to candidates not taking jobs with BPD? ▪ What incentivizes officers to stay at the Baltimore Police Department? What causes them to leave?

The Path to Public Innovation is adaptive. As an i-team moves through each phase, it should revisit the problem frame and adjust as needed.

Design Research Methods

Teams use a mixed methods approach to design research, incorporating qualitative and quantitative research into their understanding of the problem and strengthening their case for change.

Qualitative data includes all non-numerical data, and often uses illustrative stories of people and communities impacted by the problem to help innovators understand why it must be addressed.

- Stories are the currency
- Help understand the 'Why'

Quantitative data relies on numbers to help innovators understand what the problem is, who it affects, and its scale.

- Numbers are the currency
- Helps understand the 'What'

A diversity of research methods provides the i-team with insight from multiple stakeholder lenses, including marginalized, underrepresented, and often underinvested-in residents and community groups.

Stakeholder Interviews: Talking to and Learning from People

Stakeholder interviews are one of the notable methods i-teams use. A stakeholder interview is a one-on-one conversation with someone who is impacted by the problem, has close knowledge of someone impacted by the problem, and/or someone who has expertise related to the problem. Interviews use open-ended questions to learn about the participant's experiences and perspective on the problem.

Open-Ended Questions

Open-ended questions cannot be answered with a simple 'yes' or 'no'. They help the interviewer see things from a resident's perspective in their own words. Open-ended questions often begin with the following words and phrases: why, how, what, describe, tell me about, or what do you think about.

Open-Ended: What is the most important priority to you? Why?
Closed-Ended: Is housing security the most important priority to you?

The stakeholder mapping conducted earlier helps identify the key voices to include in this process. In focusing research, consider prioritization and representation. How might the team prioritize those who experience the problem most or are most vulnerable to impacts of change? What is a representative sample for making a case to elected officials?

Common stakeholder groups include, but are not limited to:

- residents who experience the problem.
- government officials who manage policy and programs related to the problem.
- stakeholders in other sectors (e.g., business, civil society groups, non-profits, funders) who are invested in the problem.

Stakeholder interviews are often conducted in-context, which means the interviewer meets the participant in their neighborhood, workplace, or home. To build trust and learn as much as possible, interviewers acknowledge the participant as the expert of their lived experience and observe their real behavior.

Toolkit
See the Playbook Toolkit for guidance on creating interview guides.

In **Bogotá, Colombia**, when the mayor tasked the i-team with bringing more residents into formal credit markets, the team engaged more than 200 young people in their neighborhoods who used risky informal loans. The interviews illuminated the why behind their actions – the predatory loans were transparent, fast, and predictable, in contrast to their experiences with banks – and explained how inequitable market access spurred the creation and popularity of problematic alternatives.

The Bogotá team's approach demonstrates the importance of paying attention to power dynamics and trust. Young people interviewed their own community members, with whom they had trusting relationships, about a sensitive topic. The candid nature of the interviews allowed the team to develop an authentic understanding of the problem from those most impacted by the challenge, who shared information that likely would not have been shared directly with government officials.

Because interviews often cover personal experiences with social problems, it is important for teams to consider power dynamics, historical trauma, and ongoing inequity that may exist for both the participant and the interviewer.

While the team most frequently focuses on engaging residents most impacted by the problem, in almost every case, teams also engage city staff and seek to deeply understand existing and previous efforts, perceptions of the problem, and opportunities to make a greater impact.

Key Activities and Questions for City Staff

1 First, **identify existing initiatives**. Conduct desk research to understand any current or previous initiatives focused on solving this specific problem or programs that are related to this problem and might be related to the i-team's work.

- Speak with city colleagues who have a high-level view of city initiatives and historical context (e.g., communications, mayor's office).
- Speak with department liaisons and review recent reports and other materials in departments that work on topics related to the problem frame.

2 Then, **interview key senior and frontline city staff** about existing and previous initiatives. Be sure to ask about successes and failures. Ask specific questions and broad, abstract questions to discuss the challenge from different angles. Capture as much detail as possible, take verbatim quotes, and note specific, surprising responses. Sample interview questions include:

- What is the theory behind current activities/initiatives? How did they emerge?
- What has been tried before? Did it work? Why or why not?
- Do current or previous activities have stated goals and are they meeting them?
- If they are not successful, why not?
- Do existing programs work so well that they ought to be expanded?

3 Determine opportunities to continue to **engage city staff** stakeholders, such as:

- bringing interview participants on "data walks" to help make sense of data collected.
- sharing the i-team's synthesis for their feedback and reactions.
- inviting interviewees to brainstorm and provide feedback during ideation and prototyping phases.

Resident engagement in Louisville, KY, (top) and Mexico City, Mexico (left); research synthesis from resident co-design sessions in Mobile, AL (right)

Observation

The observation method collects data on people's behaviors and practices in the setting where they interact with a program or service. This method is used with city staff or with community members and can reveal details that an interview participant may not think to share otherwise. Observations can be conducted in-person and/or virtually.

- **In-Person Observation:** Observe people behaving and interacting from a respectful distance. This might include visiting a park or public space to see how residents are using various amenities.
- **Photo Journal:** Ask participants to illustrate their experience by taking pictures throughout the day as they engage in a task or interact with the challenge the i-team is researching.
- **City Staff Shadow:** Learn firsthand what it is like to perform a particular job or task. Follow around, or "shadow," a person or team, in a certain service or function. In **Louisville, KY**, for example, where the i-team was working to improve the city's emergency medical services, the i-team accompanied an ambulance unit on a ride-along.

To minimize judgment or bias when conducting observations, i-teams often use the **"AEIOU" framework**:

Activities: What activities are individuals participating in?
Environments: What environment surrounds the activities the individual is engaging in?
Interactions: What interactions is the individual participating in? What interactions are happening around the individual?
Objects: What objects is the individual using? What objects surround the interaction?
Users: Who is involved in the interactions or activities? Who else is nearby?

Before selecting the observation research method, consider the power dynamics. Depending on the problem the i-team is researching, observation may not be an appropriate research method. When the team is seeking to understand the experience of vulnerable or marginalized community members and/or the topic area is sensitive, such as homelessness, observation could feel intrusive, disrespectful, or voyeuristic.

Literature Review & Peer City Research

Analyze published information related to the problem. Literature reviews can provide a deeper understanding of how the problem impacts communities today, historical context, and solutions that have already been tried. Literature review sources include:

- Peer reviewed or published journal articles
- News articles
- Data sets (e.g., U.S. Census Data or UN Data)
- Social media posts
- Podcasts, blog posts, books
- Case studies from research organizations

A team can also identify peer cities that have similar characteristics to the i-team's city (e.g., size, population, income) and take the following steps:

1. **Gather information:** To what extent does the problem exist in the identified peer cities around the world? How is the problem similar to and different from the problem in the i-team's city? What factors do cities that experience the problem share? What factors do cities that have avoided or mitigated the problem share?
2. **Summarize findings:** Based on the desk research, summarize background information on peer cities, describe their experience with the problem, and detail what they have done to address it.
3. **Conduct city outreach and interviews:** Reach out to peer cities to learn more. Conversations with peer cities may lead to documentation, data, or details that are not publicly available. Consider including departmental partners and future implementers in such calls to engage them early in the process.

Designing Inclusive Research

When conducting research, it's important to:

- minimize bias – or the introduction of systematic errors into the data – via the choice of research methods,
- carefully consider factors that facilitate or exclude residents from engaging, and
- apply techniques like disaggregating demographic data to analyze how different demographic groups are affected by the problem.

An inclusive research practice continually examines how each team member's identities, values, biases, assumptions, and relationships to power and privilege impact how they engage with the team and the communities in which they work. This holistic approach considers:

- diversity, power dynamics, and relatability of the i-team members and the residents with whom they are engaging,
- where data is being collected, including how stakeholders are selected for participation, and
- who is analyzing the data and what preconceived ideas and/or unconscious biases they have about the topic, communities of focus, and related concerns.

Without intentional planning and design, research can unintentionally be skewed to fit preferred outputs and narratives. The i-team avoids this by diversifying the skill sets and experiences of researchers and decision-makers in analyzing the data. A minimum of three people, each with a different set of data skills, should review and analyze each element of the research process, from selecting the research methods and constructing the interview questions to developing the themes and insights from the collected data.

Quantitative Data Analysis

Teams conduct in-depth analysis of data identified in the data inventory process. Historical data can help answer key questions about trends and root causes of the problem. Key questions in analysis include:

- Has the problem been persistent, or has it surfaced in the past several months?
- Is the problem accelerating, slowing down, or holding steady?
- When has the problem been most acute, and did something happen that might explain the increase?
- Are there consistent patterns, such as seasonal effects, in data changes?

The i-team might help city agencies review existing data. For example, an i-team that is working to understand the average time between initial permit application and permit issuance might work with agency staff to comb through a sample of past records to establish a baseline, and later institute new procedures to facilitate ongoing tracking of this information.

Layering data from multiple sources together may enable more sophisticated analysis and unique understanding of a problem. For example, the i-team in **Syracuse, NY**, tackled several infrastructure challenges, one of which was road reconstruction. The city wanted to better understand the relationship between road reconstruction processes and demographic factors like race, age, and income, so they could create safeguards to ensure that road reconstruction efforts were not exacerbating historical inequities.

The team created an equity score by bringing together publicly available data points from the American Community Survey to quantify the proportion of historically underserved residents in each census tract in the city. The equity score considers how many residents who are: living below the poverty line, people of color, single parent households, living with a disability, rent-burdened, elderly, or possessing low educational attainment. The metric established a relationship between road reconstruction and the share of historically underserved residents and enabled the city to consider equity as a factor in prioritizing road repairs.

Selecting and Tailoring the Right Research Method

Given the variety of research methods that can be used, it is important to understand the conditions that suit certain methodologies best. The following table illustrates potential uses of each method, as well as common pitfalls of each method and other considerations.

TO UNDERSTAND	USE THIS METHOD	CONSIDERATIONS
First-hand experiences or perspectives on a problem	**Stakeholder Interviews**	Do not cause further harm; approach interviews from a trauma-informed perspective.
How people interact with services or processes, or behave in certain situations	**Observation**	Avoid situations where an observation would feel intrusive or voyeuristic, or would change the interaction.
What the research says about this problem and potential solutions	**Literature Review**	Be mindful of potential biases of sources.
How other cities are tackling this issue	**Peer City Research**	Find applicable peers and foster candid conversation with them.
Answers to *what*, *how often*, *where*, and *how many* questions	**Quantitative Data Analysis**	Do not infer the why of a problem; this method requires careful analysis to interpret correctly.

Field research in Toledo, OH

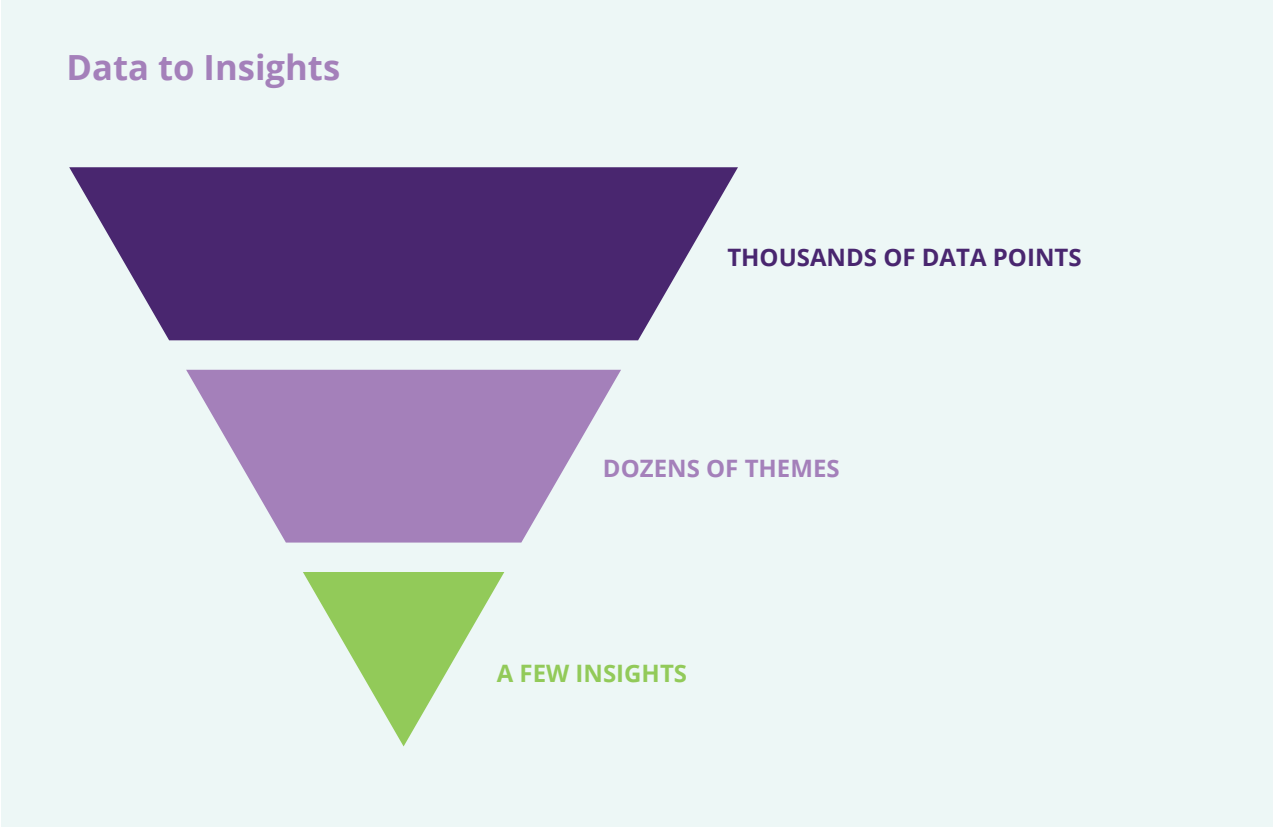
SYNTHESIZE AND REFRAME

Synthesis is a process of **reviewing the data** collected during research activities with teammates and other stakeholders as appropriate, drawing themes and relationships across the data, and distilling those themes into insights that provide a clearer understanding of the problem. The new understanding is expressed in a problem reframe that tells a cohesive story, articulates the need for change, and inspires new ideas for solutions.

Synthesis

When starting synthesis, the i-team **distills key data points**, quotes, notes from interviews, and observations, onto Post-It notes (physical or digital) with one data point per note, with a focus on important, surprising, or provocative points.

The team then **develops themes**, by reflecting on what the team sees as commonly recurring ideas or facts in the data. Themes are specific and have a direct focus, but do not need to be profound to be useful in the next step. Consider breaking up data points into multiple themes if one theme has collected ten or more data points. Themes are then distilled into insights that help the i-team illuminate the true problem. Not all data leads to a theme and not all themes lead to insights.



This image, developed in collaboration with Greater Good Studio, illustrates the process of moving from data to themes to insights.

To move from themes to **insights**, the team asks what the data means. If the team is unable to develop an insight, the members may need to conduct additional research. New research questions that arise during synthesis are noted as a part of the process.

Great insights are memorable and hard to ignore because they describe a tension or conflict that keeps the problem stuck. An insight provokes the team to ask, "what can we do about this?" After the team has generated insights, the members present findings with select quotes and themes to make a compelling case for action.

The Path to Public Innovation is adaptive. As an i-team moves through each phase, it should revisit the themes and insights and adjust as needed.

There are multiple methods to employ during data synthesis, including:

- **Data walk:** Team members and stakeholders gather to sort, categorize, and analyze the research together.
- **Data experts:** If included in the team structure, an i-team's in-house data scientists and ethnographic researchers synthesize findings and share with the group. The i-teams can also consider taking advantage of local academic resources or hiring a consultant or part-time data scientist to analyze the findings.
- **Third party skeptic:** Independently, the i-team synthesizes the data and then chooses a team member to question the validity and sources of the insights.
- **Qualitative insights to direct quantitative analysis:** Ensure that qualitative insights complement and enrich quantitative data to provide a fuller picture and aid in the interpretation of findings. For example, is a quote that says businesses aren't using recycled water because of insufficient supply borne out in the quantitative data?
- **Stakeholder map to draw comparisons:** Look at data by stakeholder group to reveal inequalities that may not be fully reflected in aggregated data. For example, is a quantitative insight about street safety complicated by disaggregating the data by ability, status, or age?

SYNTHESIS EXAMPLES	
Data Point	▪ 60% of children in the community are exposed to violence, crime, or abuse. ▪ "I didn't feel like I was safe at school. Joining a gang gave me friends and a sense community."
Theme	▪ Teens join gangs because they are looking for a sense of belonging, comradery, and protection. ▪ Parents in the community are striving for a better life for their children.
Insight	▪ If anti-gang recruitment efforts are aimed at the high school level, it's already too late. ▪ For some young people, a "social death" is a bigger risk than an actual death.

After the i-team completes its synthesis, it reengages residents and stakeholders to validate its insights. The team focuses on continuous engagement during synthesis to ensure that the insights truly capture residents' needs and perspectives, help build community support, and continue to build trust.

The i-team uses questions like the following to confirm observations:

- "Is this what you meant?"
- "Does this insight resonate?"
- "Did we miss anything?"

A New Problem Statement

Based on the insights surfaced, teams frequently find that their initial problem frame needs to be revised before they can start generating new ideas for solutions.

At the end of synthesis, the team looks at the problem frame again, layers in their new insights and understanding of root causes, and makes adjustments.

Equipped with a revised problem frame that reflects what the i-team learned during the design research phase, the team is now prepared to start ideation — the process of rapidly generating solutions.

■ Pilot program for mobility in Anaheim, CA

PROBLEM FRAME	PROBLEM REFRAME
Amarillo, TX The problem is that some residents are not educated about how to dispose of large bulk items in the city and refuse piles up in unauthorized sites. Immigrants, new refugees, local renters, and property owners near these sites are impacted. This is a problem because when this happens, the blight continues and compounds, and their property values decrease.	The problem is rental property ownership has exponentially grown in San Jacinto reaching 73% (rental). Properties run as large operations (hundreds or thousands of units) are managed by property management firms in highly transactional ways, with high tenant churn in the neighborhood. As tenants often move, they leave possessions behind and either they or the property owner illegally dumps them. This is a problem for the whole neighborhood, including tenants, business owners and neighbors, and the city as a whole. The situation encourages others to add to the problem, and illegally dump. People 'shop' these items, scattering them and making things worse. This is a problem because the Solid Waste Department cannot keep up, picking up debris as fast as they can in a negative spiral. The situation endlessly perpetuates itself because the behaviors (and values) do not change. There is a need for more consistent city operations and consistent or better communications about them.

Researching water usage in Sunnyvale, CA

PROBLEM FRAME	PROBLEM REFRAME
Sunnyvale, CA The problem is a perpetual state of drought, which increases future dependency on recycled water. However, over 90% of its recycled water currently flows to the bay. This is a problem for schools, property owners, and local residents who face increased pressure to conserve water in worsening drought conditions.	The problem is the City of Sunnyvale is unable to deliver the quantity and quality of recycled water that non-residential customers need. Furthermore, Sunnyvale lacks the capacity to provide relevant and timely information about recycled water to different audiences. The current recycled water delivery system fails to reach many potential new recycled water customers including large water users such as schools and parks. This is a problem for current customers as they can't manage their recycled water operations efficiently or track progress against their recycled water usage goals accurately. Without examples of measurable success, it is harder for potential non-residential customers to get on board with recycled water, so they continue to use potable water. This is a problem because when non-residential customers do not maximize their recycled water usage, opportunities to offset potable water usage are lost, putting more pressure on conservation requirements for residents. Residents are adversely impacted by increasing drought restrictions (e.g., shorter showers, dead yards) without gaining the expected quality-of-life benefits from recycled water usage in public spaces (e.g., greener parks). And, without a clear understanding of how recycled water benefits them, residents may not support recycled water investments needed to improve the system.

IDEATION

Upon completion of the design research process, the i-team holds a nuanced understanding of the problem. Next, i-teams are ready to move on to the exciting step of generating potential solutions to these issues – ideation. Ideation provides an opportunity to rapidly explore different solutions to the i-team's revised problem frame.

Through ideation, the i-team uncovers bold new possibilities for services, systems, policy, or products. Rather than one singular solution, ideation provides the building blocks for a portfolio of initiatives that is based on a multi-faceted understanding of the problem and a shared vision for success – the AIM. The ideation process yields a mix of short- and long-term ideas, bold and practical ideas, and ideas that address simple and complex issues to deliver real results for residents.

Ground Rules for Ideation

In addition to generating ideas themselves, i-team members are facilitators charged with helping peers, residents, and stakeholders unlock ambitious, exciting ideas. As facilitators, i-team members establish norms to help participants temporarily set aside concerns for efficiency and practicality and highlight creativity. Teams use the following ground rules to guide ideation:

- **Let go of constraints and assumptions.** Preemptively concluding that some ideas may be too daunting, impossible, or unrealistic limits the development of novel and innovative ways of thinking or approaching a problem issue.
- **Continually refer back to insights.** Make sure that ideas are responsive to real needs.
- **Defer judgment.** There is merit in every idea, so aim to embrace every idea! Open-mindedness helps build out a diverse and large portfolio of initiatives. No idea is a bad one at this stage.
- **Prioritize quantity over quality.** The more ideas, the better! There is time later on to combine, refine, and prioritize ideas.
- **Collaborate often.** The best ideas present themselves when groups work together. Use language such as "Yes, and…" to build on each other's ideas.
- **Think big.** In the early phases of ideation, it's a much better idea to go too far and encourage grand ideas rather than practical ones. Rein it back later, rather than thinking only practically about an idea. Ambitious ideas enable the team to look at the problem from an entirely new perspective.

■ Ideation in Action: a hack-a-thon in Louisville, KY (top); community co-design in Atlanta, GA (left); and brainstorming prioritization in Seattle, WA (right)

Ideation Techniques

An i-team can choose from several effective ideation techniques to generate potential solutions. These include:

TECHNIQUE	EXAMPLES
Behavioral Insights	A behavioral science lens enhances the effectiveness of solutions by unpacking how people are likely to relate to solutions, even before prototyping. A framework from The Behavioral Insights Team suggests that policymakers who wish to encourage a behavior make it easy, attractive, social, and timely.[6]
Borrow and Adapt	Drawing on peer city research, i-teams find out whether other cities are experiencing the same problem and how are they addressing it. If there are sound solutions, how might the i-team adapt these ideas to meet the residents' needs? How can the i-team customize these solutions to respond to their unique political context?
Challenge Prizes	A challenge prize (also called prize competition) is a way for governments to crowdsource and incentivize the development of promising solutions to public problems.
Community Co-design	Community co-design is a participatory approach to generate solutions to challenges with the people who most directly experience them, particularly residents and front-line city staff.
Crowdsourcing	Gathering ideas from a large group of people. This is often done digitally via the Internet, social media, or smartphone apps. How can the i-team use open innovation techniques to hear new voices and look at the problem from an alternative viewpoint? How can the i-team engage youth and educational institutions, small businesses, and start-ups to expand their portfolio of ideas?
Expert Advice	Engage evidence-based practices and ideas for a particular challenge. Innovation Teams explore what the academic literature says about solutions to the identified challenge and then ask themselves how the research setting is similar or different from the i-team's city. How can the i-team customize these solutions within their city's context explored in the research phase?

6 Owain Service, Michael Hallsworth, David Halpern, Felicity Algate, Rory Gallagher, Sam Nguyen, Simon Ruda, Michael Sanders, with Marcos Pelenur, Alex Gyani, Hugo Harper, Joanne Reinhard & Elspeth Kirkman, EAST: Four Simple Ways to Apply Behavioural Insights (The Behavioral Insights Team, July 2015), https://www.bi.team/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/BIT-Publication-EAST_FA_WEB.pdf; see also "Principles," Ideas42, https://www.ideas42.org/learn/principles/.

TECHNIQUE	EXAMPLES
Futurecasting	To push thinking, i-teams consider probable and radical future states of the city (e.g., population boom, increased automation). What current constraints cease to exist in this future state? What opportunities are unlocked? What needs and roles are different?
Hack-a-thons	Hack-a-thons, often a day- or weekend-long event, bring together designers, technologists, and residents to develop creative solutions to city-wide problems. Hack-a-thons often center data analysis to develop technological solutions and can include prizes for winning ideas.
Problem-based or Challenge-based Procurement	Cities are increasingly using problem-based procurement (also called challenge-based procurement) to improve the quality of solutions offered by their vendors. Rather than laying out detailed technical specifications of the desired solution, cities articulate the problem they aim to address via the procurement.
Problem Zoom	Problem zoom asks the i-team to start by generating solutions that meet the needs of specific residents or communities. Then, explore how these might meet the needs of the entire city.
Structured Brainstorming	A structured brainstorm keeps the focus on goals and helps everyone feel comfortable in sharing their ideas. What ideas emerge from insights identified in the research?

Consistent across all the techniques is the recognition that the most ambitious interventions may not be immediately obvious or accessible to decision makers. The team reviews the ideation data closely to help develop, combine, and elevate the ideas that are the most bold and impactful.

Toolkit

See the Playbook Toolkit for additional ideation resources.

Stakeholder feedback workshop in Birmingham, AL

DEEP DIVE

Community Co-Design with Residents

Co-design is an opportunity for power-sharing and trust-building between the city and residents. By consistently engaging residents and creating venues to hear their ideas and concerns, i-teams cultivate interest and even demand from residents for innovative ideas and can shift the culture of the city. Consider the following to create an inclusive and collaborative co-design experience:

- Build a comfortable, accountable, and brave space for residents to engage in ideation. The city's history of resident engagement or lack thereof can impact residents' comfort sharing ideas. Consider power dynamics, expectations from residents, pre-established agendas and priorities of the mayor, and time and budget constraints.
- Honor the solutions that already live in the community. Discuss with residents how those solutions might be elevated or supported. This can be as simple as asking residents, "What works for you already?"
- Respect residents' lived expertise, experience, and knowledge of their community. Rather than only asking for new ideas, ask which ideas resonate best with residents, how they might define success on the issue, and how they would prioritize ideas for impact.
- Be mindful of the time and resources residents and community groups are being asked to contribute to this process. If possible, compensate participants for their time. Consider likely barriers to participation (e.g., childcare, transportation). How might the i-team and its partners address these barriers and simultaneously build trust?
- Ask for feedback about what must not be changed while designing solutions.

COMMUNITY CO-DESIGN EXAMPLES

Calgary, Canada

With a dwindling young adult population, Calgary wanted to become a more desirable place for young people to live. Through their research, the city team identified two key problems: lack of career opportunities and a lack of cultural opportunities. This design research led the city team to focus on designing a more robust, inclusive, and creative downtown community for a diverse range of young people.

By directly engaging with young people where they spent the most time, such as skate parks and malls, the team co-designed solutions with 147 young residents, generating a total of 590 ideas. Through this co-design process, the city gained crucial insights: young residents wanted to feel safe traveling downtown on public transportation and wanted robust arts and culture activities downtown. After participating in ideation, one young person shared, "We felt heard, seen, and considered. Thank you for this very inclusive initiative."

Baltimore, MD

While Baltimore had struggled for decades with the challenge of squeegeeing – young people who wash windshields at high-traffic intersections to earn money – the issue gained heightened attention after a fatal encounter between a motorist and squeegee workers in 2022. To tackle the root causes of unauthorized squeegeeing throughout the city's intersections, Mayor Brandon Scott convened the Squeegee Collaborative – made up of over 150 individuals from nonprofit and faith organizations, businesses, government, academia, and squeegee workers themselves.

The Collaborative directly engaged squeegee workers in the research, ideation, and co-design process, by surveying, holding focus groups, hosting community engagement sessions, and including squeegee workers in the Collaborative itself. This co-design process resulted in a recommended portfolio of initiatives aimed at creating alternative employment opportunities and supportive services for young people and targeted enforcement to ensure the safety of specific intersections.

Creative ideation activity for community input in Calgary, Canada

Communication Practices and Routines During Research and Ideation

During research and ideation, i-teams benefit from internal communication practices and routines to build a collaborative, productive, and creative team culture. Consider these effective practices:

1

Tools for Tracking Project Progress, Goals, and Roles

Digital tools like Gantt charts, spreadsheets with task assignments, weekly email updates, and physical tools like sticky notes on a whiteboard to track tasks (i.e., who is working on what)

2

Check-In Meetings

Short weekly or daily check-ins to share progress amongst the team, compare field notes from research, ask for help, and offer suggestions

3

Regular Information Sharing and Engagement with City Leaders

Routines for sharing updates with city leaders, including talking points about the team's successes and early insights or revelations from the research helps prepare them to talk about the work with key stakeholders and the public

4

Communication with Stakeholders

Newsletters, websites, social media, or other informal mechanisms for sharing progress and key qualitative and quantitative data to document process and early lessons

5

Norm and Definition Agreements to Ensure Inclusive Design Principles

Norms around empathy, humility, and inclusivity and shared definitions of key terms minimize the impact of unconscious biases and should be revisited regularly

Research project briefing in Fortaleza, Brazil

Mayor Brandon Scott preparing for a video shoot for the COVID-19 campaign focused on the Baltimorean resident experience

Storytelling

During the early stages of design, and as the work progresses, the i-team engages in a regular storytelling practice to generate interest in and excitement about the work inside and outside of city hall. Successful storytelling demonstrates the effectiveness of the innovation approach, shares how the solutions improve outcomes for residents, and ultimately builds stakeholder support needed to sustain innovation work.

A story transforms information into material that can be absorbed, processed, used, and shared. A story creates a narrative that **informs** people, **connects** them to a larger purpose, and **invites** them to do something with the information.

Each time an i-team tells the story of their work, they have an opportunity to inform residents, city staff, and other stakeholders about their initiatives and progress; connect stakeholders to the larger, ambitious goal of their work; and invite them to help or stay informed on progress. Sometimes, storytelling moments are formal, such as town hall presentations, mayor briefings, or ideation sessions, and sometimes they are informal, such as sharing with friends and colleagues. Consider the informal moments as practice for more formal moments to come.

When storytelling, i-teams center the "why" of their work, their AIM, to ensure that the message stays consistent and effective. Throughout their engagement, i-teams communicate the "why" to key stakeholders, including city council, the mayor, and other funding bodies, whose buy-in helps them sustain and scale their work.

Toolkit
See the Playbook Toolkit to learn more about storytelling.

Effective Stories:

- focus on one essential idea,
- include details that evoke sensory experience,
- enable the audience to relate on a human level, and
- are simple, memorable, and repeatable.

Audiences

Defining audiences is key to effective storytelling. To understand who the i-team's target audience is, including who needs to hear a message, where and how they receive messages, and how they may respond, consider using the stakeholder mapping activities conducted earlier to create an audience map.

Communications Plan

In addition to the storytelling that the i-team is already doing during their research and ideation work, teams implement plans to share stories publicly via the media. There are cases in which the political considerations may not allow for regular sharing, but i-teams prioritize working openly to build support and commitment for the innovation process.

Communications plans include:

- **Earned media:** "Earning" the coverage, which usually includes pitching a reporter or editor directly or holding an event (e.g., press conference).
- **Paid media:** Buying advertising (e.g., billboards, print ads in newspapers or magazines, digital advertisements on social media).
- **Owned media:** Channels that the team has direct control over (e.g., website, newsletter, social media). This can include content marketing using videos, photo slideshows, and blog posts.

Innovation Teams may wish to publicize innovation efforts that specifically address mayoral priorities. The i-team director can work with mayoral communications staff and with stakeholders to develop a communications plan that targets key audiences identified via audience mapping, establishes mayoral commitment to the AIM, and leverages a combination of media types.

In **Tel Aviv, Israel**, Digitaf was launched by the i-team to connect parents with municipal services online, helping Tel Aviv become a child-friendly smart city. For its communications, the team took many creative approaches. Banners proclaiming "Digitaf – your digital card for children under 3" were rolled out all over the city. A dedicated social media administrator was hired to manage Digitaf and its social media presence. To be more accessible, the team partnered to translate parenting tips into Tigrinya, the language spoken by Eritreans, to serve an estimated 50,000 asylum seekers in the city, many of whom have young children. In addition, the city also integrated information and parenting in community centers and public spaces.

In **London, England**, working to tackle one of the mayor's top priorities – building digital access for Londoners – the London Office of Technology & Innovation (LOTI) built and led the Digital Inclusion Innovation Program, which supports individuals who have barriers to accessing technology (e.g., mobility challenges, hearing impairment, unemployment, language barriers). LOTI created a publicly available map, as well as toolkits, to help boroughs identify areas of digital inclusion and affected groups and their needs, helping government innovators more effectively and accurately support their residents.

Preparing to Activate

By the end of the **Design phase**, the i-team feels confident in the following:

- ☑ Framing the problem
- ☑ Developing a research plan
- ☑ Conducting design research
- ☑ Synthesizing data by creating themes and insights
- ☑ Using ideation to generate new and exciting solutions
- ☑ Beginning to craft a communications plan

These key steps delineate the way to the next phase of **Path to Public Innovation: Activate.**

PHASE 3

ACTIVATE
DELIVER INITIATIVES

During the Activate phase, i-teams co-design an innovation portfolio with stakeholders, develop creative governance models, and bring their ideas to life to deliver results for residents. Activation requires engagement with key partners – especially residents – to prototype new ideas, collect feedback, and transform promising ideas into impactful initiatives. This work is done in close collaboration with the mayor, city hall staff, and stakeholders responsible for implementing and managing the initiative.

INNOVATION PORTFOLIO

At the start of the Activate phase, i-teams create a portfolio of initiatives that builds on the solutions generated during ideation and best positions cities to move the needle on achieving their AIM. An innovation portfolio enables cities to simultaneously pursue multiple initiatives to advance the AIM, increasing the likelihood of impact for residents.

A portfolio approach is imperative for i-teams because it avoids the risk of taking just one or two big bets. A portfolio creates the opportunity for multiple collaborative partnerships, mitigates risk if one or two initiatives fail, creates synergies between multiple initiatives and efforts, and can help improve coordination across a complex system.

Fortaleza, Brazil, a city of 2.5 million people, prioritized decreasing traffic fatalities and built a portfolio of initiatives around this goal. Compiling and analyzing traffic data, Fortaleza launched a traffic data platform to understand the scope of the problem and used this information to identify and tackle the root causes of road safety and urban mobility challenges. The city created a portfolio of hundreds of initiatives, including protected bike lanes and improved bus services. The multi-pronged approach resulted in a 58% reduction in road crashes over ten years.

In **New Orleans, LA**, the i-team supported the creation of a portfolio of eight initiatives around public safety and violence reduction. One of these initiatives was NOLA for Life, an inter-agency initiative that worked to prevent violence before it happened, intervene in the midst of violence, and rehabilitate and repair harm after violence occurred. This diverse portfolio of strategies contributed to reducing the murder rate by 21% in five years and decreased the average daily population in jail by 17% in one year.

Prioritization and Portfolio Development

Coming out of the ideation process, the i-team has collected many ideas that are often projects, but may also be policies, communications efforts, and investments. Some ideas represent quick wins and others are riskier; some are ready for implementation and others need more work. Working closely with lead implementers, key stakeholders, and partners, the i-team refines this slate of ideas and prioritizes the ones that are most impactful for residents and help achieve their AIM. Innovation Teams facilitate the prioritization process, sharing perspectives on why ideas should or should not move forward to prototyping, and reminding partners of the key insights from the Design phase and how they relate to the ideas that have been developed. The i-team also helps partners center ideas that increase equitable outcomes for historically underrepresented residents.

Turning an idea into a tangible innovation requires time, monetary investment, resources, and capacity to deliver. Innovation Teams prioritize ideas based on several factors including:

- **Impact:** Using the AIM as a guide, identify potential benefits that the idea could bring driving transformational change.
- **Fit:** Consider how this idea fits in the overall portfolio of ideas. When considering the ideas together, is there a well-balanced portfolio that is likely to produce short-term results and other ideas that are bolder and riskier and could produce change over a longer period of time?
- **Feasibility:** Consider opportunities and constraints related to budget, capacity, capabilities, and existing partnerships. How confident is the team that they have the resources aligned to deliver?
- **Demand:** Does this idea address a demand that was heard during the design research? Does it have support from key stakeholders? Does this idea align with the vision of the mayor? Civil society? Residents?

Then, while looking at ideas through these criteria, the team can make a decision on each idea:

- **Go:** the idea meets the criteria and should progress
- **No Go:** the idea falls significantly short of the criteria
- **Modify:** the idea could meet the criteria with some tweaks
- **Park:** hold as a potential idea to revisit in the future

The portfolio includes some ideas that are highly likely to produce short-term results and others that may produce transformative change over a longer period. The most successful portfolios have support from key stakeholders and are important to the mayor and their legacy.

The Path to Public Innovation is adaptive. As an i-team moves through each phase, it should revisit the portfolio prioritization plan and adjust as needed.

Toolkit

See the Playbook Toolkit to learn more about prioritization.

Engaging the Mayor and Other Stakeholders

An ambitious innovation portfolio facilitates lasting change. However, change can be difficult for residents and city leaders who may be interested in maintaining the status quo or are skeptical of or resistant to new ideas.

As the i-team co-designs the innovation portfolio, it is particularly attentive to engaging the mayor and understanding their appetite for risk and tolerance for failure. The i-team works with the mayor to calibrate a balanced portfolio that aligns with administration and city priorities. To increase the likelihood of success, the i-team works with its partners and other senior city leaders to prioritize ideas that the mayor enthusiastically supports.

During the prioritization process, the i-team also continues to engage key external stakeholders who may play a role in the ultimate success of initiatives. This group could include residents, nonprofit organizations, businesses, academic partners, and local philanthropy.

Innovation Teams know that collaborative and effective prioritization is the foundation for successful project delivery. It's how an i-team aligns its portfolio to overall strategy, it's how it builds collaboration and support, and it helps ensure that key projects are resourced.

Collaboration with youth and artists in Bogotá, Colombia (left) and Amsterdam, the Netherlands (right)

Metrics, Data, and Impact Measurement

Management of the innovation portfolio requires adopting a measurement plan as well as timely and reliable data to inform decision-making and keep leadership, partners, and key stakeholders informed. Innovation Teams are responsible for facilitating this planning; ongoing data collection; and driving action, continuous learning, and evaluation from the data collected. When planning the measurement approach for the innovation portfolio, i-teams establish measurement frameworks for individual initiatives as well as the overall portfolio contribution toward achieving the AIM.

The success of innovation initiatives – and ongoing support for them – is predicated on the ability to measure and demonstrate impact. Innovation Teams have to be thoughtful and strategic when selecting their measurement and impact framework because the purpose and focus of innovation work is inherently different from day-to-day government work.

In managing an innovation portfolio, goals might shift as practitioners learn more about the systemic problem and refine desired outcomes through the innovation process itself. Measurement and evaluation work needs to reflect and understand this conceptual agility that is critical to the work of effective systems transformation. In practice, i-teams can take a more adaptive approach to developing a measurement and evaluation plan by following the guidance below.

At the initiative level, i-teams answer the following questions in their measurement and learning plan:

- What data can be collected which shows movement in the right direction? How can balance be achieved between using existing data versus establishing new data collection mechanisms? Who are the residents to learn from to see if the initiative is having the expected outcomes?
- What are the results or targets to achieve at the initiative level? What is the time frame?
- What value does this initiative seek to achieve in advancement of the AIM? How is it connected to other initiatives in the portfolio?

At the portfolio level, i-teams answer the following questions in their measurement and learning plan:

- Across initiatives, what data can be collected which relates to key concepts and shows the team is moving in the right direction? How can storytelling be used to show progress on achieving the vision, goals, and impact?
- What are the measurable outcomes that lead to systems change/realization of the AIM?

In **Vancouver, Canada**, the Solutions Lab (SLab) uses a developmental evaluation method throughout the iterations of their practice as a way to track what they're learning and what insights are emerging from a user-centered perspective. Practitioners go through repeated cycles that ask: What did we do? What happened? What does that mean? Which key relationships and insights have emerged? And then, now what? What sort of capacities do we want to deepen and cultivate? The SLab regularly employs this method as a part of its learning in a way that fits their practitioners' emergent innovation approach, which does not know what the outcomes of the process are going to be.[7]

The Innovation Portfolio and Collaborative Partnerships

Local governments today fulfill more roles than ever before and face increasingly complex and wicked challenges. In order to meet this demand, governments collaborate with a multitude of partners to activate their innovation portfolios. Innovation Teams engage partners in many ways during the implementation of the innovation portfolio including:

- **Advisors:** advisory boards or committees can help inform, advocate for, and advance initiatives.
- **Data Collection:** academic and institutional partners can help manage the data collection from initiatives; including qualitative stories and feedback from residents.
- **Delivery:** other governmental bodies and non-governmental partners can help deliver initiatives.

This collaborative approach requires governments to move away from the belief that they can have complete authority and control over outcomes. Instead, they must move towards an approach that embraces long-term outcomes, caring for systems, empowering others, and the complex adaptive nature of policy.

The Centre for Public Impact describes the four capabilities required for making this model of partnerships work:[8]

- **Doing:** focus on behaviors and what the team does
- **Relationships:** focus on empowering people and enabling relationships
- **Being:** focus on the values, mindsets, and assumptions that drive the team's behaviors
- **Efficiency:** focus on making things happen and working efficiently

Living in a world that is rapidly changing, i-teams understand that concepts of governance are changing too. As the i-team advances its work, it is increasingly attuned to incorporating partners and stakeholders into building and fostering relationships that can drive sustainable change.

7 Lily Raphael and Lindsay Cole interview by Terrance Smith, July 29, 2022.
8 Alli Edwards and Jessica Fuller, "Introducing the Stewardship Matrix: Uncover your approach to systems stewardship," *Centre for Public Impact*, May 9 2024, https://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/insights/introducing-the-stewardship-matrix-uncover-your-approach-to-systems-stewardshiphttps://www.centreforpublicimpact.org/insights/introducing-the-stewardship-matrix-uncover-your-approach-to-systems-stewardship.

PROTOTYPING, FEEDBACK, AND LEARNING

Overview

With a portfolio of ideas in hand, i-teams, lead implementers, and their partners prototype ideas that require additional feedback and refinement. A prototype is a physical or digital model of an idea built to clarify how the idea will work in the world. Prototyping an idea does not mean that the i-team is ready to launch the final version; it means the i-team is ready to build a very simple, rough draft of an idea – or elements and features of that idea – and quickly share it with key stakeholders for feedback and improvements.

Innovation Teams conduct multiple rounds of prototyping to collect feedback on different assumptions about an idea and to improve it. Building prototypes and getting feedback on them helps the i-team achieve four key outcomes.

1. **Build a shared understanding and engage community:** Prototypes are an effective way to interact with and receive feedback from residents and stakeholders and build support for implementation of a solution.

2. **Achieve real-world impact:** With each prototype, the i-team improves its understanding of what residents need and how residents might interact with an idea. Feedback improves the likelihood that an idea addresses the root causes identified during the research phase.

3. **Reduce risk:** Prototypes help confirm or disprove assumptions early. The team quickly learns what is working and what is not. Then, the i-team can make changes in the early brainstorming stages, and not waste time, money, community trust, or political goodwill on designing or implementing solutions that communities do not need, want, or use.

4. **Plan for scale and implementation:** Through this process, the i-team gains a better understanding of the potential implementation and can determine if this prototype becomes a pilot, a fully-scaled program, or is discontinued and replaced with a different idea.

A team in **Savannah, GA**, used idea cards and mockups to prototype their idea. They wanted to improve access to healthy foods for residents of West Savannah, a neighborhood without a grocery store located within one square mile. The team brainstormed an idea to bring fresh and healthy foods into existing local corner stores and gas stations. Before implementing the idea, the team needed to learn if businesses would allow it and if so how residents would use these stores to access healthy foods. With a broad idea at first – bringing healthy foods to residents – the team used the first round of prototyping to refine their idea with idea cards. These idea cards presented options for how existing corner stores could offer fresh fruit and vegetables, such as food trucks and vending machines. The team then asked local corner store business owners and residents to rank the idea cards based on their preferred method of food distribution. Through this process, the team was surprised to learn that the vending machine was the most preferred option for business owners.

Next, the team created the "Healthy Food Vending Machine" prototype. For this second round of feedback and learning, the team created a life-size printout of the branded vending machine. Then, the team invited residents to interact with the prototype and pretend to buy food from the machine, with the team observing and noting the residents' behavior, such as types of food and payment methods that residents preferred. The team reached over 60 residents through surveys and other interactions and learned that residents loved the vending machine idea and wanted to see the idea scaled to additional locations. The team also improved the vending machine based on resident feedback, such as ensuring that the machine accepts EBT card payments. By collaborating with the community throughout the prototyping process, the Savannah team was able to narrow their original idea to meet business owner and resident needs and make the vending machine accessible and desirable to use.

In **Maceió, Brazil**, the team initially set out to improve quality of life in an under-resourced neighborhood. Through research conducted in partnership with local nonprofit and frontline staff, the team learned that childcare was a high priority for the neighborhood and would help improve women's earning potential. This learning allowed the team to narrow their focus to close a gap in childcare as a way of investing in a better future in the neighborhood.

The team co-designed and generated more than 150 ideas with 16 residents. They chose to iterate on one idea: a shared daycare network. The team used storyboards to get feedback on the concept from education and health professionals and families with young children. Then, the team used idea cards to work with parents and caregivers to prioritize their interests in the network. This process allowed the team to refine the concept from a shared childcare network made up of mothers to a much more expansive and resilient network that includes other resources in the community.

Frameworks for Prototyping

The following are tools for i-teams to consider using as part of their prototyping process.

LOW FIDELITY PROTOTYPES				
	WHAT	WHY	WHEN	EXAMPLE
STORYBOARDS	A series of images and text that helps explain how an idea would work and depicts the experiences of a stakeholder interacting with it.	Storyboards confirm how residents currently perceive the problem, help a resident understand how they would interact with an idea, and explain how the idea might improve outcomes for residents in a way that is easy to understand.	Storyboards are often useful in the early stages of concept development and feedback collection, specifically if the i-team wants to confirm and challenge assumptions about how different people may interact with a solution or how a solution will work.	Leaders in **Grand Rapids, MI**, wanted to help their community understand opportunities for residents to provide input during the local urban planning process. The team built out a full storyboard of the input process, and then walked residents through the experience, asking them where they would want to give input.
SKETCHES	Community co-creators provide ideas or give feedback through rough drawings.	Sketches engage community members in real time and invite them to generate and communicate ideas, allowing the i-team to quickly iterate and receive feedback.	Sketches are often used in the early stages of an idea.	In **Phoenix, AZ**, residents sketched ideas to make bus stops safer and more comfortable in extreme heat.
IDEA CARDS	Simple descriptions that briefly explain the idea or an element of the idea, the benefit to stakeholders, and how it works.	Idea cards enable community members to help prioritize or rank different ideas or different elements of the same idea. They are often used in concert with storyboards.	Idea cards are very useful for early-stage prototyping.	City leaders in **Albany, NY**, wanted to help renters better understand tenant protection and renter rights through a Renter's Bill of Rights. Renters ranked categories on idea cards in order of importance, which helped the team understand what information renters needed.

■ A range of prototyping approaches in Orlando, FL (top left); Los Angeles, CA (top right); Fortaleza, Brazil (bottom left); and Barcelona, Spain (bottom right)

Toolkit

See the Playbook Toolkit to learn more about prototype planning.

MEDIUM FIDELITY PROTOTYPES				
	WHAT	**WHY**	**WHEN**	**EXAMPLE**
ROLE PLAY	A participant or core team member acts out a service or experience for a stakeholder. This might involve delivering a pre-written script or body language direction. At a higher level of fidelity, the role play might be combined with a simulation experience.	Role play helps the i-team understand how their idea might play out in the real world, and which people might be involved in the service or experience. It helps i-teams quickly improve their idea.	Role play can be used in the beginning and middle stages of the prototyping process.	In **Philadelphia, PA**, a team used role play to test a new trauma-informed intake process for justice-involved youth. The team placed a couch, play space, table, books, plants, and soft wall art in the intake room where a young person and justice officer or therapist role played the intake experience. The team received feedback from youth who watched the role play, including how they felt based on how the center looked and what could be improved.
WIREFRAMES	Paper or digital models of online, digital, or app-based experiences.	Wireframes clarify the vision and structure for a web- or app-based service and allow stakeholders to provide feedback. Wireframes focus on content, functionality, and user journeys, and do not typically include color or specific design elements that can distract stakeholders.	Wireframes are helpful at the start of the prototyping process.	**Quito, Ecuador**, leaders were interested in creating a platform to help local businesses and manufacturers understand their carbon emissions so they could then decrease those emissions. Before investing in the full, final online version of the idea, the team created and shared a simple wireframe with the business owners and manufacturers and asked: How would you use this website? What is helpful? What is distracting and not helpful? Feedback helped the team tailor and improve the site in the next stages of planning.
SIMPLE MOCKUPS	Bring ideas to life by modeling experiences or interactions using digital and/or physical spaces. Simple mock- ups could include 3D items like Legos or cardboard boxes, or digital tools like Miro.	Simple mockups take a developed idea and test how it might work in practice, uncovering questions that help refine an idea and prepare it for implementation.	Simple mockups are best used in the middle and late stages of the prototyping process.	In **Coral Gables, FL**, the team wanted to create an energy microgrid for their community to use during storm emergencies. The team used Legos to create a mockup of a grid and its different elements. After creating a mockup, the team received feedback from engineers and residents, which helped them design a stronger microgrid without incurring unnecessary costs.

MEDIUM FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

	WHAT	WHY	WHEN	EXAMPLE
COMMUNICATION MATERIALS	Draft emails, flyers, web pages, and other means of sharing information with residents.	Communication materials help i-teams understand what language and visual design work best to elicit a specific behavioral change or understanding. Communication materials can be low in functionality – preliminary details and design provide the team with insight into what will and will not work.	Communication materials can be used early in the prototyping process to gather feedback on high-level aspects of ideas to ensure that these are interesting and helpful for residents. Later in the process, communication materials can be used to complement high-fidelity prototypes as the team builds awareness for initiatives.	The **Amarillo, TX**, team prototyped communication materials with information for residents about how to dispose of bulk waste items. They found that using pictures on the materials increased the accessibility of the information and increased proper disposal.

HIGH FIDELITY PROTOTYPES

	WHAT	WHY	WHEN	EXAMPLE
SCALED MOCKUPS	Display an idea in its almost finished digital or physical form and invite full participation and interaction with the idea.	Scaled mockups simulate an idea in its end-to-end form, building an understanding of the aspects that need to be improved before investing additional resources.	Scaled mockups are best used in later prototyping phases.	In **Seattle, WA**, the i-team created a scaled mockup of a COVID-19 testing site to prototype new testing methods before opening sites across the city.
3D PRINTING	Turn ideas into physical products.	3D printing is a fast and cost-effective way to create high-fidelity physical prototypes that participants can interact with.	3D printing is best used in later prototyping phases.	In **Anchorage, AK**, the team worked with residents to 3D print different versions of N95 masks during supply shortages during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Artificial Intelligence in Design Research

As an emerging technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI) presents opportunities for usage along the Path to Public Innovation. While AI is not intended to be a replacement for conducting design research, ideation, and prototyping, it can serve as a complementary tool that enhances and accelerates the design process for i-teams.

While the options for AI models and tools are growing and changing rapidly, widely available AI models can assist teams along the Path to Public Innovation at the following key moments:

- Analyzing large data sets
- Transcribing interviews and focus groups
- Taking notes for calls and meetings
- Selecting research methods
- Organizing design research for analysis
- Generating ideas by assisting in brainstorming sessions and sentiment analysis
- Analyzing sticky notes, photographs, and other research products
- Generating interview guides and plans
- Coding qualitative data to accelerate data synthesis
- Producing low fidelity prototypes

As city teams tackle complex challenges, they are encouraged to explore innovative tools that can help them gain clarity on problems and explore possible outcomes.

In **Turku, Finland**, the team sought to reimagine its employment services ecosystem from the perspectives of service providers, employers and educators, and employment seekers. Generative AI provided a perspective on how other cities around the world tackled employment services. The Turku team used AI to create key research elements, such as stakeholder profiles and interview guides. They also used AI to synthesize research findings, generate ideas from a scan of global databases, and create guidance for impact measurement.

Using AI in design research can also present challenges, including bias and data privacy concerns. An i-team should adhere to city standards and broader best practices, including engaging AI experts as needed, to apply ethical standards and ensure proper data usage and validation.

For i-teams seeking ethical guidance and frameworks for the use of AI, the Global AI Ethics and Governance Observatory, City AI Connect, GovAI Coalition, and others offer resources to help navigate the most pressing challenges posed by AI.

PILOTING INITIATIVES

Piloting Overview

Like prototyping, piloting is a way to iterate and refine an initiative. Piloting usually requires a higher level of fidelity and a greater commitment of time and resources. When piloting, the i-team has developed a prototype that works and is taking the next step: delivering an initiative on a smaller scale and adjusting based on results and feedback before making plans to fully scale the initiative. Innovation Teams also assess how the initiative can be delivered and sustained over time, evaluating various routines with key stakeholders.

The goal of piloting is to collect data, gather feedback, iron out processes and systems for delivery, track behaviors, and document outcomes. Sometimes a pilot validates a prototype, while other times a pilot fails – a critical and informative part of the innovation process.

Remember, not every initiative needs to be piloted. Sometimes, prototyping on a small-scale may be enough to fully launch an initiative, or to prove that a planned initiative might not achieve intended results. For example, an i-team may launch a discrete website feature, such as a chat function, aimed to reduce barriers of resident engagement, test that feature with a small focus group, and then implement it directly on their website based on feedback. In this case, the team can go directly from prototype to implementation at scale because of the scope of the project and the tool's intended use.

Innovation Teams use the following steps to guide their piloting process:

1. Implement the pilot in a controlled and limited environment. This allows for a more manageable implementation, facilitates real-time adjustments, and minimizes potential risks associated with scaling too quickly.

2. Implement robust data collection mechanisms to gather relevant metrics and feedback during the pilot. Analyze the data to assess the effectiveness of the idea, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions about how to improve.

3. Actively seek feedback from all stakeholders involved in the pilot, especially the community members and city staff. Use the feedback to make necessary adjustments. The iterative process is crucial for refining the pilot and enhancing its impact.

4. Document the entire pilot process, including successes, challenges, and lessons learned. Share this knowledge with key stakeholders. Transparent communication contributes to a culture of innovation and continuous improvement.

5 Identify and engage key stakeholders and allies. During the pilot phase, these change agents and collaborators support delivery in a variety of ways:

- They are part of the implementation team with roles/responsibilities.
- They take action within the community to ensure tasks are handled.
- They bring influential and creative ideas to collaborating with others.
- They are partners and organizations that can help drive momentum and ensure the innovation reaches underserved communities.

6 Identify possible critics. During the pilot phase, the i-team considers who are possible critics and how might they be engaged in the pilot process. This is a stakeholder group that needs engagement to ensure that they are not barriers to change or negatively impacted by the innovation.

Plan the Pilot: Implementation Plan

The i-team works with lead implementers to establish an implementation plan for each initiative across the portfolio, including project management and stakeholder engagement routines. This work ensures a successful transition from the i-team to the implementation team and increases the chance of success and long-term sustainability. A comprehensive implementation plan includes the following elements: initiative charter, adaptive work plan, data collection and feedback plan, risk register, and a communications and storytelling plan.

Toolkit
See the Playbook Toolkit for implementation plan templates.

The Path to Public Innovation is adaptive. As an i-team moves through each phase, it should revisit the implementation plan and adjust as needed.

Initiative Charter

A charter provides a clear, concise, high-level summary of the implementation plan. Charters are living documents intended to be referenced (and changed, when necessary) throughout an initiative's life. A charter includes the AIM, sponsors and lead implementers, a brief description of the initiative, budget resources required to launch, timeline and key initiative milestones, activities and deliverables, quantitative or qualitative impact targets, and risks.

Innovation Teams can complete elements of the charter as inception documents and fully complete the charter after working through the detailed steps of the implementation plan.

Adaptive work plan

Innovation Teams employ an adaptive approach to project management which means the team learns from previous outcomes, decisions, and feedback to improve its future delivery. This is an alternative approach to more traditional project management, which generally relies on inflexible governance and an annual planning and funding cycle.

An adaptive work plan comprises:

- **Pilot goals:** the change the team hopes to achieve as a result of the pilot. This is tied to the achievement of the AIM and the measurement and learning plan that was developed as part of the innovation portfolio.
- **Major milestones:** work with the lead implementers to map the critical milestones of the initiative. Milestones signal anchors in the timeline such as project start and end dates, high priority tasks, deliverables, and checkpoints with key stakeholders and leaders. In an adaptive approach, i-teams know that the plan is likely to change and be flexible as they go and the team continues to build out details throughout the pilot phase.
- **Individual tasks:** depending on the pace of the pilot, i-teams work with implementers to sequence tasks and actions into weekly or monthly steps in alignment with milestones and target dates (identified in the previous steps). Innovation Teams and partners update these actions as they go, remaining adaptive as the pilot progresses.
- **Resources to get through the journey:** the last step in adaptive work planning is to build a clear understanding of resources and staffing.
    - First, the team considers the skills and the staff required to implement the pilot. Who brings those skills, and how can they delegate roles and responsibilities accordingly? It's also essential to consider the availability of personnel. How much time are they able to commit to the project?
    - Second, funding is also a critical consideration. Can the team or implementers pursue relevant grants and/or other budget opportunities? Are there donors or external partners onboard? If not, the i-team considers these options while shaping the financial constraints of the work. A funding strategy can include tapping into multiple funding sources, including federal, state, and local government, foundations, private philanthropy, and more.
    - Third, are there regulations, policies, or protocols that may impact the pilot? These need to be determined prior to starting the pilot.

Data Collection Plan

Throughout the activation and delivery process, i-teams establish routines to consistently collect and analyze data related to initiatives in their portfolio. This data can be used internally to support adjustments to the initiative, shared with stakeholders to build support, and communicated with residents to present successes.

Innovation Teams review the metrics established during the portfolio development and come up with a detailed plan on how and when to collect the data. As with the work plan, the data collection plan is an adaptive tool that answers the following questions:

- **What is being measured?** What are the key learning questions? What outcomes is the i-team trying to capture?
- **What is the data source?** Is this new or existing data? Does the team have access to this data?
- **How is the data measured?** Is it qualitative or quantitative? What metrics are used?
- **Who is going to gather data?** Who is responsible? Is this a new responsibility?
- **How and when the data will be collected?** Is a new data collection system needed? Are surveys or interviews needed to collect this data? How frequently is data collected?
- **In what format is the data presented?** How is this data most effectively used for communications, storytelling, and reporting? How does the team ensure data is presented in a way to drive action and decisions?

Risk Register

A risk register is a document that is used as a management tool to identify potential setbacks within a project. This process aims to collectively identify, analyze, and solve risks before they become problems.

It includes information about the priority of the risk and the likelihood of it happening. It also includes tangible mitigation measures. At the onset of the project, the i-team can start the risk register by anticipating a set of risks and working with the team on early mitigation strategies.

Communications and Storytelling Plan

Throughout the implementation process and at the end of the initiative, i-teams regularly communicate the value of the innovation work to city hall and to the public. Accessible and human-centered stories help build support for initiatives and position the team for long-term sustainability.

From the beginning of the initiative, the team identifies moments where and how they plan to share the work. Working closely with the city's communication lead, they determine key messages, strategy, coordination with communication of other city initiatives and priorities, and determine platforms (e.g., website, social media) and modes of communication (e.g., videos. infographics). They also share timelines for initiative launches and press releases, roles and responsibilities, key press contacts, and create talking points for the mayor about the i-team and its role.

Innovation Teams employ a variety of storytelling strategies to share their work.

Charged with improving the city's response to blighted homes, the **Mobile, AL**, i-team created a public blight map to clearly display abandoned properties and analyze paths to improvement. This tool used data to share progress with residents and other key stakeholders, highlighting a 44% reduction in blighted properties within two years.

The **Seattle, WA**, i-team regularly shares stories from impacted residents on its blog, while teams in **Los Angeles and Long Beach, CA**, create newsletters to highlight key accomplishments and make their work more accessible to the public.

Delivery Routines

There are five specific and mutually reinforcing delivery routines which help ensure that the right information reaches the right people at the right time. Each of the following delivery routines is designed to be used on a regular, recurring schedule.

1 Initiative Check-in Meeting

WHAT Regular meetings to identify and troubleshoot implementation issues and review progress.
WHY A key component of the Initiative Check-in template is the "traffic light status." The status reflects the overall progress of the initiative as compared with expectations, including completion of implementation steps and progress against goals.
WHO Lead Implementer and Project Manager, and others as necessary
WHEN Weekly or bi-weekly
KEY QUESTIONS

- What deliverables/tasks are expected this week and next week, and are they on track to be completed?
- What progress has been made since the last update?
- What new and emerging issues have been identified since the last meeting?
- How does the team plan to resolve current issues and who else needs to be involved?

2 Team Check-in Meeting

WHAT Regular team meetings to provide updates to the director, discuss challenges and solutions, and examine progress across the portfolio.
WHY Innovation Team Updates are most effective if the same standardized template is used at each meeting. The Project Manager(s) use the information from their Initiative Check-Ins to help prepare the Innovation Team Update meeting template.
WHO Relevant members of the i-team
WHEN Monthly
KEY QUESTIONS

- What is the overall status of the portfolio, and each initiative within it, based on milestones and targets set in the implementation plan?
- What are the major issues, and how critical are they? Is each issue an implementation problem, or is it something more serious that challenges basic assumptions about the initiative?
- What is the plan to resolve the issue? Will it sufficiently address the issue, and who needs to do what?

3 Mayor's Update

WHAT Memo to provide the mayor with an overview of progress, escalate issues, and share upcoming key decisions.
WHY Mayor's updates highlight issues where the mayor needs to act, such as approving a course of action or resolving a controversy. Memos offer clear recommendations for action and suggest one-on-one meetings as needed. Memos are no longer than two pages and follow a consistent structure, such as:

1. Key successes to celebrate
2. Status of each initiative with supporting data
3. Key issues to be resolved with proposed solutions and supporting data

WHO Project Managers, Director; Director sends briefing memo to mayor
WHEN Bi-weekly to monthly
KEY QUESTIONS

- What progress has been made and what is the status of each initiative and the AIM overall?
- What are the main challenges and issues with implementation?
- What is the path forward, and, in particular, what can the mayor do to help move things forward?

4 Stocktake Meeting

WHAT Meeting to review implementation progress, reward achievement, and increase senior leader accountability.
WHY Stocktakes are the most important routine for cultivating cross-departmental collaboration and creating a shared foundation for discussion with clear, accurate data and a focus on the most pressing issues. Innovation Teams play a large role in preparation, but a relatively minor role in the meeting, which is primarily a dialogue between the mayor and initiative sponsors. Stocktakes also help establish the professional reputation of the i-team. Before a stocktake, i-teams brief the mayor about key challenges so that they are ready to ask questions about progress and problem resolution during the meeting.
WHO Mayor, Workstream Sponsors and Lead Implementer, Director, with others as necessary
WHEN Quarterly
KEY QUESTIONS

- What is the status of the AIM overall, and within each individual initiative?
- Is the team on track to achieve its overall target?
- What are critical implementation issues? How is the team going to address them?
- What is the path forward and what is each department going to do to achieve the goal(s)?

5 In-Depth Review and Briefing Memo

WHAT Analytical assessment of the efficacy of initiatives and implementation to document lessons learned and evaluate what is working, what is not, and needed alterations.
WHY In-depth reviews serve as an opportunity for a high-level look at an initiative to understand risks, barriers, and modifications that may be needed to the implementation approach. The goal is to reassess the prospects for achieving targets once implementation has begun.
WHO i-team (leads process), Workstream Sponsors and Lead Implementer; i-team sends briefing memo to mayor
WHEN Semi-annually
KEY QUESTIONS

- What is the progress overall and is it on target?
- What risks and challenges exist and how can they be mitigated?
- Is it necessary to revise the charter or eliminate initiatives that do not appear likely to succeed?
- Do new initiatives need to be added to the portfolio and does the capacity of the team support this?
- Are the team and key stakeholders aligned long-term sustainability goals?

In addition to these five delivery routines, it is crucial that the i-team creates routine touchpoints with residents and relevant community groups. For example, many i-teams host quarterly town halls or send out monthly newsletters to keep residents engaged, informed, and excited about the i-team's progress.

FROM PILOT TO SCALE

Scaling Overview

After a pilot, perhaps even while working through a pilot, the team is going to consider if the initiative should stop at a pilot or if the initiative should be scaled. Scaling is defined as expanding the initiative beyond a controlled and limited environment to a greater level – sometimes much greater.

When an i-team is considering scale, these are the big-picture questions to ask:

- Was the desired impact seen? If yes, how?
- Did the pilot demonstrate widespread support?
- Is this innovation sustainable? Can it be carried forward?
- Are there enough funds and human resources to scale?

Remember, it is okay to stop at the pilot phase and not scale – not achieving outcomes or "failure" is learning and it is acceptable to go back to the design process, create something new, or try another initiative.

Memphis, TN, piloted 901RideChoice, a free hotline for older adults and individuals with disabilities seeking reliable transportation options. Originally launched as an initiative to improve non-emergency transportation services to wellness visits for older adults and those with disabilities, the 901RideChoice quickly evolved into a hotline to support residents seeking information about transportation options. Based on feedback from users and the success of the pilot – with the hotline receiving over 2,500 calls during its pilot year – 901RideChoice became a fully-scaled program.

In **Paris, France**, devastating heatwaves in 2003 and 2017 prompted the city to transform asphalt schoolyards into greener spaces. The effort was piloted in ten schoolyards with student and community co-design. The program is now being implemented citywide, with more than 75 sites to-date.

Types of Scale

There are three different types of scale that can be achieved: up, out, and deep. This is also a decision the i-team makes in collaboration with the mayor, key stakeholders and implementation partners.

Scaling Up

Scaling up involves increasing the impact of a project by expanding its reach to a broader audience or larger geographic area. This typically means increasing the size or capacity of the project to serve more people or regions. It often requires additional resources, such as funding, staff, infrastructure, and partnerships.

Example: A successful local health initiative is expanded to cover the entire state or country, thereby reaching a significantly larger population.

Scaling Out

Scaling out focuses on replicating a successful project in new locations or contexts. Instead of simply increasing the size of a single project, scaling out involves creating multiple versions of the project in different areas or communities. This approach emphasizes standardizing the core elements of the project while allowing for local adaptations to fit specific needs.

Example: A community-based education program that has proven effective in one city is replicated in multiple other cities, each adapting the program to its unique cultural and demographic context.

Scaling Deep

Scaling deep emphasizes deepening the impact of a project within the existing scope rather than expanding its reach or replicating it. This approach focuses on enhancing the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of the project by fostering deeper engagement, improving practices, and creating lasting cultural or behavioral changes.

Example: An environmental conservation program works to deepen its impact by fostering stronger community engagement, changing local behaviors and attitudes towards conservation, and embedding sustainable practices into the community's daily life.

Implementation Plan for Scaling

To move to scale, the i-team develops a formalized implementation plan for scaling the innovation. This plan builds off of the pilot plan and addresses additional resource requirements, policy adjustments, service changes, community participation, data collection, communications, and any other considerations necessary for a successful, sustainable full-scale rollout.

SUSTAINING INITIATIVES

Innovation Teams work with their sponsors and implementers to think through sustainability of initiatives that are achieving the desired outcomes and impacts. A key strategy is to plan for a balanced portfolio that can produce some quick wins to secure buy-in for efforts that may take more time to show impact. Innovation Teams have taken different approaches to ensuring that initiatives are sustained from working within city hall to tapping into local philanthropic sources.

City Funded and Adopted: In this approach, the i-team works within the city to implement and fund innovation initiatives.

In **Bogotá, Colombia**, the Care Blocks program brings city services to women who provide unpaid care for their families' caregivers. The Care Block system has since made it into the city's Development Plan, which is the four-year plan for the city's priorities and budget. This adoption has ingrained the program into a core offering from the city.

Partnership Model: In this approach, the i-team works to develop a creative partnership model for its initiatives and leverages funding sources that include philanthropic, state, and federal grants.

In **Pomona, CA**, Mayor Tim Sandoval's team focused on a portfolio of initiatives to help improve the lives of children and their families. Funded through the federal American Rescue Plan, the Household Universal Grant (HUG) Program is piloting a universal basic income for 600 families. The city partnered with FORWARD, an organization that works with governments to deliver resources and funding to communities, for implementation. The program also includes UCLA as a research partner, and support from the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.

Handover Model: In this approach, the i-team helps to identify a local partner and build its capacity to sustain an initiative in the long-term.

In **Memphis, TN**, the i-team piloted a new program called MEMFix to quickly test new urban planning and placemaking tools to activate commercial corridors. To sustain this work, the i-team partnered with a local non-profit, BLDG Memphis, to manage the initiative. BLDG Memphis received initial funding and support from the i-team and has continued to attract local investment for MEMFix.

Preparing to Sustain

Activation is truly the secret to success in public innovation but can get quickly derailed if progress stalls. Innovation doesn't fail because of a lack of ideas. It fails because teams are not prepared to activate and deliver innovation portfolios. The focus of i-teams in this stage skews towards questions of how to move from a great idea to implementation:

- How can a team align partners, stakeholders, and resources to enhance outcomes and impact?
- How are stakeholders held accountable during delivery?
- What are the best ways to communicate and share with the mayor and residents?

Innovation Teams that utilize a structured and adaptive approach to implementation can ensure that innovation work is impactful and sustainable.

In considering the work of **Phase 4: Sustain**, one of the most important things an i-team can do to ingrain innovation is demonstrate resident impact. By activating innovative solutions and portfolios that produce meaningful improvement in residents' lives, an i-team also fulfills a key obligation of their work to prove that an innovative approach is valuable and worth sustaining.

PHASE 4

SUSTAIN
INGRAIN THE WORK

Throughout the Path to Public Innovation, while achieving impact on a critical challenge for a city, i-teams also lay the groundwork for a citywide adoption of innovation practices. During the sustain phase, public innovation becomes an enduring part of city practice and culture.

In addition to delivering results via their AIM and portfolio of initiatives, i-teams sustain their work by attending to three core components of an innovation strategy: philosophy, people, and process. Though an i-team's approach is always adaptive to city context, mayoral leadership, and city government structures, these three components remain essential foundations for successfully sustaining and growing innovation within city government.

Toolkit
See the Playbook Toolkit for templates to develop an innovation strategy blueprint.

Pilot effort to create safe spaces for children in Dublin, Ireland

PHILOSOPHY: THE NORTH STAR

An innovation philosophy describes the core values that public innovation provides to residents and the city, contextualizing the work within leadership's aspirations for the city, and articulating the city's goals for growing its innovation practice.

Examples of core values that might guide a city's innovation philosophy include:

- Embracing creativity and learning
- Relentless focus on delivering results for residents
- Appetite to take considered risks and learn from them
- Working collaboratively and embracing iteration and adaptability
- Commitment to inclusivity and advancing equity
- Centering transparency, continuous improvement, and accountability

Not only can these values guide an innovation strategy, they can also be used more tactically to build commitment from city leadership, connect an i-team's storytelling work to a bigger picture, and inform decisions.

PEOPLE: THE KEY TO MAKING AN INNOVATION TEAM LAST

To sustain momentum and commitment to innovation practices, the i-team cultivates support inside and outside of city hall. This requires a multi-faceted, dedicated effort that includes working on issues that matter to residents, sharing results and stories, building relationships with a broad range of stakeholders, and training city hall staff on innovation methods.

Build Support for the i-team Inside City Hall

Throughout the Path to Public Innovation, the i-team works with the mayor to choose an AIM that addresses the city's most pressing needs and works with partners – especially senior city leaders – to build an initiative portfolio that impacts residents in ways they can see and feel. Along the way, the i-team generates excitement for its work and approach among senior city leaders, providing the foundation for collaboration with these key stakeholders in the future. The mayor, when well-informed about the i-team's work, can set the tone and build buy-in for innovation by speaking publicly about the i-team's techniques, initiatives, and impact.

In **Louisville, KY**, Mayor Greg Fischer's enthusiasm helped encourage and inspire stakeholders across city hall to align with the mission of addressing housing and deteriorated properties in the city. This engagement from a city leader helped his i-team launch over 35 initiatives, which led to Mayor Fischer creating a core city function to continue the work.

Preparing for Mayoral Transitions

While mayoral leadership and attention to mayoral priorities are key to an i-team's success, mayors do leave office. If the i-team is seen only as a special project of the incumbent mayor and does not build broad-based support among other city stakeholders, it is challenging to sustain an innovation culture beyond a mayoral transition. However, with planning and consideration, i-teams can continue and expand their work across multiple administrations.

In **Syracuse, NY**, the i-team tracked the priorities of mayoral candidates to identify potential new AIMs were a specific candidate to take office. Given that the incumbent mayor was not running for re-election, the i-team was also able to meet with mayoral candidates to hear about their priorities and explain the role and value of the i-team. They enjoy support from mayoral leadership and continue as the Office of Analytics, Performance, and Innovation, with a robust team that also has dedicated staff for digital services.

In **Memphis, TN**, the i-team director joined the transition team for the incoming mayor. This role helped communicate the value of the i-team's approach, solidify support for their work, and identify prospective AIMs for the city to pursue. The Memphis team continues to serve its third mayor.

Train Leaders and Personnel Throughout City Hall

The i-team trains key leaders in innovation methods to promote these approaches across the city and incorporate it into staff's day-to-day work. Training and uptake of innovation methods are vital indicators of change as the i-team works to embed public innovation practices within city hall. Successful i-teams have trained city staff at all levels, from the mayor to front-line staff, using a variety of tactics.

TACTIC	CITY EXAMPLE
Hosting office hours and/or one-on-one discussions where city hall staff and community members are invited to learn about the i-team's methods and share their ideas for future collaborations.	Given their success building trust and collaborative relationships with residents, the **Mobile, AL**, i-team became the go-to resource in city hall when city leaders needed to bring stakeholders together and gather their perspectives to make informed decisions.
Providing training and capacity-building support (e.g., staff development, technical assistance) on public innovation practices within city departments or agencies.	The **Toronto, Canada**, i-team provided training on human-centered design to the Community Development Unit, a 15-person team of city staff working with residents living in Neighborhood Improvement Areas, which face inequity and underinvestment. The training was requested by the Community Development Unit and conducted across four dedicated workshops.
Honoring front-line staff with innovation awards for demonstrating mindsets and skillsets.	The **Tel Aviv, Israel**, i-team solicited ideas from city hall staff and made sure to celebrate their contributions on social media.
Developing comprehensive training programs for city hall staff.	In **Denver, CO**, Mayor Michael Hancock created the Peak program to provide frontline employees with the tools to make data-driven decisions and improve their own work. Since its inception, Peak has become known for its approach to training city staff in innovation methods. The spread of innovation resulted in millions of dollars in savings for the city.

Build Support Outside City Hall

Partnerships outside of city hall also help the i-team build and sustain innovation. Innovation Teams that work with community stakeholders to build relationships, design and implement initiatives, and embed themselves into communities of practice are able to increase the number of stakeholders who see the value of the work and are invested in its success. Funding partnerships with state or central governments, philanthropies, or corporations also lend legitimacy to the work and make i-teams' initiatives more durable.

In **Memphis, TN**, the i-team leveraged local and state government partnerships to continue scaling a program that addressed non-emergency patients' needs. Through support from Tennessee's Medicaid management agency, they were able to make the program financially sustainable. Additionally, the i-team established Innovate Memphis, a nonprofit that has attracted millions of external dollars to support city innovation.

Work on Issues that Matter to Residents

To build support inside and outside of city hall, the i-team works on issues that matter to residents and intentionally engages them. In addition to what i-teams work on — issues that are top priorities for residents and the mayor — how i-teams work can also demonstrate value and build public demand. Along the Path to Public Innovation, the i-team engages residents in research, ideation, storytelling, prototyping, and implementation, and demonstrates local government's commitment and trustworthiness.

Business owner and participant in the Small Business Portal program in Los Angeles, CA

When i-teams consistently engage residents and successfully build trust between residents and city government, they begin to raise resident expectations for future and ongoing engagement with the city. Residents then come to expect and call for working collaboratively and transparently.

In **Minneapolis, MN**, the i-team led several bodies of work focused on improving equity, from fair housing, to supporting minority- and immigrant-owned businesses, to public safety. The team prioritized resident engagement in their work and centered the issues that mattered most to them. Such close collaboration with the community created direct communication channels between residents and city government. As a result, residents expected and even called for additional public-innovation-style engagements. Enabling residents to give feedback to the city, even outside of the initiatives the i-team launched, facilitated the systematization of resident-centered practices and created public demand for the sustainability of the i-team. In addition, the i-team's designer went on to become the City Council president where he continued to lead on policy changes that came from the i-team portfolio.

Show Results and Share Stories

Strategically sharing compelling and meaningful stories with stakeholders can help make the i-team last and equip champions of this work to make a persuasive case for why public innovation is crucial to a city's long-term success.

Show Results

To share impactful results with residents, build routines to track initiative implementation, as described in the implementation plan. While lead implementers are responsible for managing the day-to-day work of initiatives within the portfolio, the i-team ensures that it is still collecting qualitative and quantitative impact data and amplifying successes and lessons learned.

In **Syracuse, NY**, the i-team consistently prepared press releases on the city's infrastructure progress, including a succinct impact statement that used data to highlight results, such as the city's success in filling over 15,000 potholes and saving over $1.2 million in infrastructure costs using new, data-based approaches to better identify and coordinate pothole repairs. The i-team shared the successes of this initiative – in addition to the problem and relevant research – on their blog, creating a platform for resident engagement and feedback.

Share Stories

As discussed in the design and activate phases, the i-team works with the mayor's office, city agencies, and other partners to develop and deploy communications strategies that tell the story of the i-team, the city's AIM, and the impact of a portfolio of initiatives. As the portfolio is implemented, consider how the i-team can sustain communications about progress and success by asking the following questions.

Why?	What purpose is the team trying to communicate? What is the problem and why does it need solving?
How?	What specific actions are the i-team and its partners taking to solve the problem?
What?	What is the proposed solution? What results has the work already produced?
To whom?	Revisit the team's earlier stakeholder maps: ▪ How will these engagements be adjusted now that the portfolio has launched? ▪ How can the communications strategy support alignment and collaboration across city hall and with key stakeholders, including residents? ▪ How might the communication strategy build excitement and support?
When?	How often are the i-team and its partners – such as the mayor's communication team, or community stakeholders – communicating about the work? Make a short list of relevant newsworthy and notable occasions for each milestone ahead.

Innovation Teams use impact reports, press releases, and public presentations to share stories about their work.

In **Austin, TX**, the i-team developed public weekly newsletters to share progress around their AIM of addressing homelessness. A typical newsletter would include a summary recent sessions and meetings, photos of ideation boards and flyers, project milestones and corresponding readings, used and remaining budget, and preliminary data findings. Additionally, each newsletter included a "Get Involved" section that listed volunteer events, conferences, and job postings.

PROCESS: MAKING INNOVATION BUSINESS AS USUAL

To make the i-team's approach stick, public innovation in cities needs to become a dedicated practice. Innovation Teams create or seize opportunities to codify innovation practices. Examples of mechanisms that cities have used in the past to codify innovation are outlined below.

Pass an executive order: In collaboration with the mayor, passing an executive order that legally mandates the sustainability of an i-team and its funding allows the i-team to continuously deliver impact.

Policy changes: Codify new city operating practices or accountability mechanisms to enforce the innovation approach and evaluate its performance across government activities and programs.

In **Bogotá, Colombia**, the i-team worked with Mayor Claudia López to pass a multi-part plan for sustaining their portfolio of initiatives, developing "care blocks" that bring together services for caregivers, care receivers, and families. To ensure the sustainability of this effort beyond Mayor López's administration, the i-team worked in collaboration with Bogotá City Council to enact legislation that put the programs into law, conducted impact studies to highlight the importance and results of the work, and involved the private sector and community to facilitate holistic buy-in.

Budgets and job descriptions: Formalize funding lines for capacities such as innovation officers or offices, or related capabilities such as resident engagement. The i-team can also work with sponsors and other city agencies to raise funds for the same. These funding lines allow i-teams to intentionally recruit candidates that have innovation experience.

In **Baltimore, MD**, the i-team was asked by the administration to co-design an office that would house the i-team. As a result, i-team positions became city-funded and team members took on advanced roles with broader responsibilities.

Resident engagement mandates: Routinize participatory innovation practices such as ideation, prototyping, and feedback gathering in established forums for resident engagement (e.g., town halls, advisory boards, public hearings).

In **Port St. Lucie, FL**, residents are invited to an annual Citizens Summit to share their ideas about the city's future and receive in-depth information from government officials about the goals of the city itself.

Labs and offices: Establish roles in new departments that use public innovation methods and strategically consider the long-term organizational placement for the i-team within city hall.

In **Boston, MA**, the i-team created a Housing Innovation Lab (iLab) that implemented a portfolio of initiatives including a two-year experiment in compact living that resulted in the approval of 15 new housing programs (e.g., an 80-unit co-living project) in nine Boston neighborhoods. Mayor Marty Walsh permanently funded the Housing Innovation Lab, and the i-team continues to operate as the Mayor's Office of New Urban Mechanics in Mayor Michelle Wu's administration.

Engage partner organizations to call for more innovation: Similar to building support outside of city hall, the i-team can formalize its partnerships to help cultivate an entire ecosystem of innovation. By engaging with nonprofits and thought leaders outside of city hall, the i-team helps to advance innovation across sectors.

In **Los Angeles, CA**, the i-team partnered with The Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), MIT's Global Poverty Research Center, California Policy Lab, and Goodwill SoCal to host an evaluation training for city staff and partners. The training aimed to equip participants with tools to develop and test initiatives to help improve the lives of residents.

Find City Council champions: To further ensure its longevity, the i-team cultivates allies in city council who understand the importance of innovation and can champion initiatives and pass policies that sustain innovation. Ultimately, city council members allocate budgets and vote on mandates, so finding and collaborating with city council champions ensures the sustainability of the i-team and innovation as a whole.

In **Austin, TX**, the i-team collaborated with council members to present their work on the Austin Homelessness Advisory Council (AHAC) at conferences in other cities.

The Path to Public Innovation is adaptive. As an i-team moves forward, it should revisit and update the innovation strategy.

Conclusion

The lessons in this Playbook serve to institute principles, ways of working, and mindsets that are inherently adaptable and can support an i-team in tackling a city's most wicked problems.

Bloomberg Philanthropies created the Innovation Teams program to take some of the risk out of innovation and enable mayors and cities to develop and deliver powerful solutions to major urban challenges. As practitioners of this program and this approach to innovation, the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins hopes that the Path to Public Innovation empowers cities to take on bold and ambitious goals to improve the lives of residents, and more broadly, positively influences service delivery in local government to drive innovation, collaboration, and better lives for more people around the world.

publicinnovation.jhu.edu
publicinnovation@jhu.edu
@publicinno