If your mission is to **support a community**, the last six months have been a very difficult time.

- Whether the community you serve is defined by **demographics**, **region, industry**, or **role**, the customary ways to connect and engage have been completely disrupted.

- At the same time, most communities are experiencing serious hardships, and many residents, businesses and services need to make **radical changes** in order to survive.

- As a result, your support is more important than ever.

- **How do you address that challenge?**

- An unexpected result of the current situation is a radical increase in the ease and potential of **virtual collaboration**.

- Although the tools for virtual meetings have been available before, they are now almost **universally adopted**. That cuts costs, increases convenience and accelerates schedules.

- At the same time, the feeling of urgency and the perceived **need for change** means members are often more willing than ever to connect and collaborate for **mutual benefit**.

And yet, there has never been a **better time** to leverage the potential of smart and motivated people to connect and work together.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

+

COLLECTIVE INTELLIGENCE

=

COMMUNITY INTELLIGENCE

*There has never been a better time to leverage the **power of communities** to develop new ideas and change the world. The key is to design effective virtual interactions that engage **diverse participants** and produce **actionable outcomes**.*

NEW ENGAGEMENT MODELS

- New models for broadly and deeply engaging with your community are now more **affordable** and **effective.**

- You can more easily engage your citizens in collaborating on **practical solutions** to shared challenges that impact them as a community, from economic development to education, healthcare and sustainability.

- You can support small businesses and entrepreneurs, facilitate **peer support** interactions and create ongoing programs for **skills building** and **mentorship**.

- You can design long-term **virtual incubators** to develop community-based products, services, and programs.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

The community intelligence approach aligns well with economic development strategies based on broad participation, such as Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) and Community Wealth Building (CWB).

" To build real community wealth, we need to **rebuild the fabric** of active community, with opportunities for real participation and collective decision making at all levels of the economy. "

EIGHT BASIC PRINCIPLES
community-wealth.org

" Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) is an **approach to sustainable community-driven development** … [ABCD's] premise is that communities can drive the development process themselves by identifying and mobilizing existing, but often unrecognised assets. "
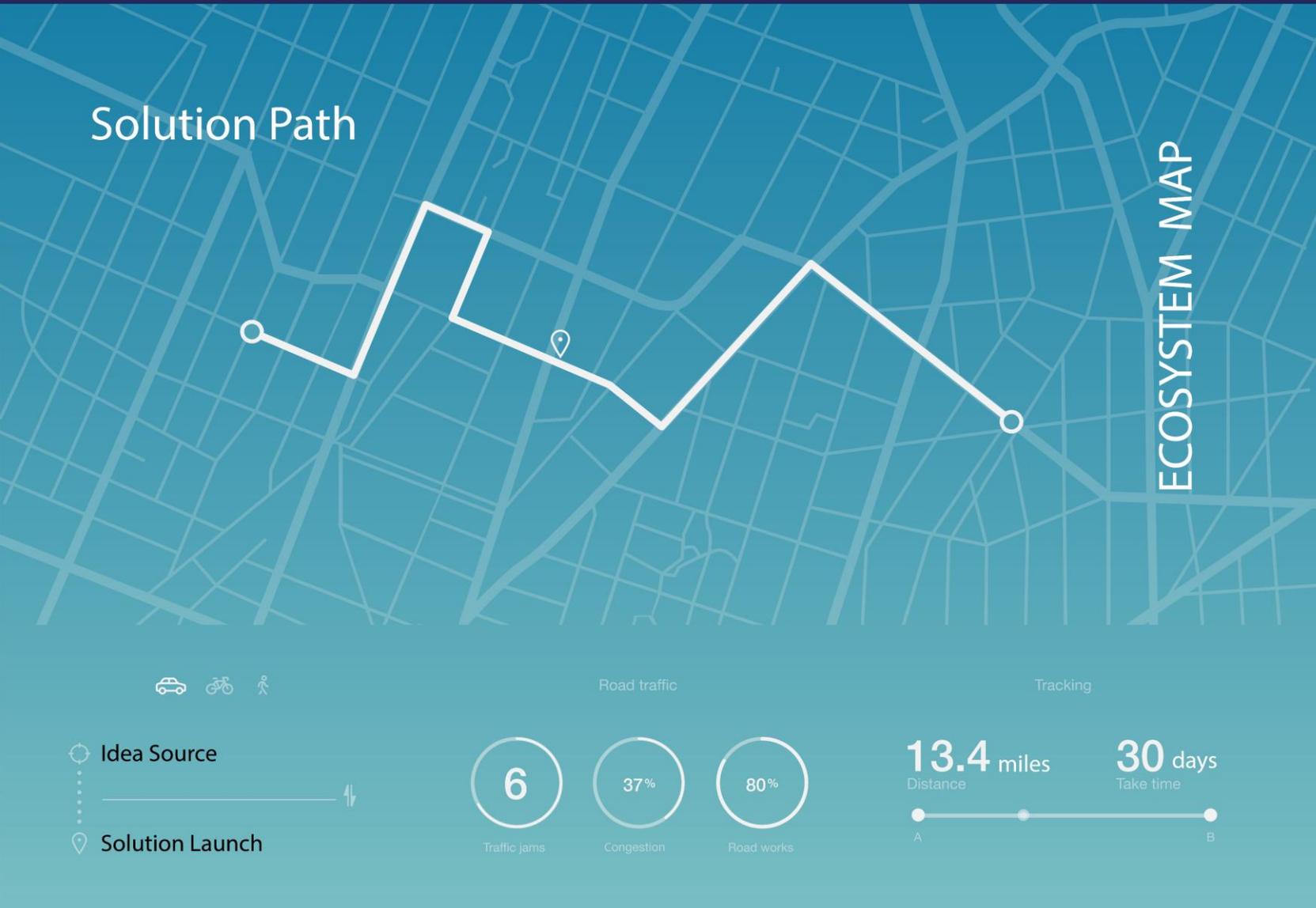
Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)
nurturedevelopment.org/

TAKING AN ECOSYSTEM PERSPECTIVE

- We tend to think of **ideas, innovation, and solution development** as being a function of individuals, teams, and organizations.

- But in many (if not most) cases, significant innovation requires development in the context of functional or regional **ecosystems**, a more complex amalgamation of small and large organizations, communities, systems, and systems of systems.

- Taking an ecosystem perspective requires looking across **multiple roles, domains, sectors, industries, geographic and demographic communities**.

MAPPING PATTERNS AND PATHWAYS

Solution Path

ECOSYSTEM MAP

Idea Source

Solution Launch

Road traffic

6
Traffic jams

37%
Congestion

80%
Road works

Tracking

13.4 miles
Distance
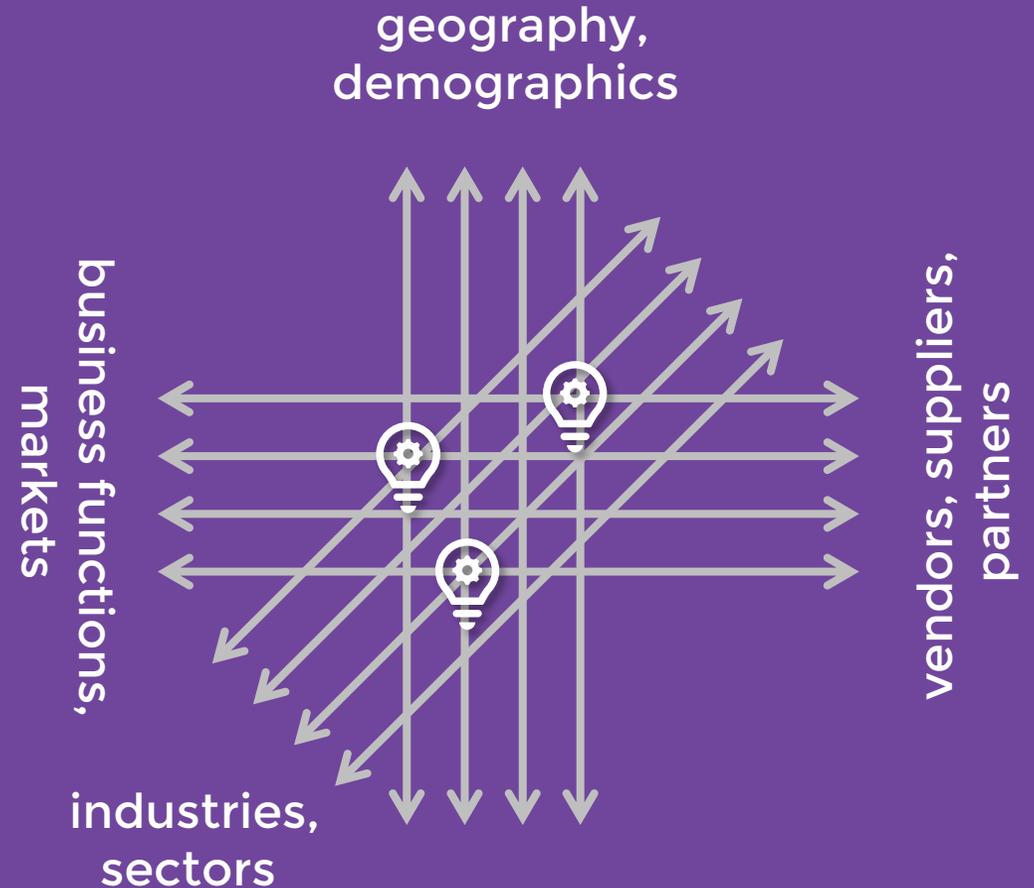
30 days
Take time

A   B

Mapping current patterns of idea generation and development pathways within a given ecosystem is a good way to assess its innovation potential, and to identify ways to **enhance that potential** by upgrading skills or building bridges between silos.

During a mapping exercise, we might be looking for the following patterns and characteristics:

- Where are the major sources of ideas which eventually become successful solutions?

- Are there groups, organizations, or communities which we might expect to be sources, but are not for some reason?

- How do ideas, concepts, plans and proposed solutions flow within the ecosystem? Do we see rigid channels, for example, or more of a cloud?

- Are there clear obstacles, barriers, moats, siloes, roadblocks, mountain ranges?

- Where are there bridges and highways and airports, or opportunities to build them?

- Where might we enhance pathways or strengthen the ability of specific groups, organizations, or communities to generate and champion ideas?

Looking for Patterns

geography, demographics

business functions, markets

vendors, suppliers, partners

industries, sectors

ENGAGEMENT DESIGN

Mapping lays the groundwork for designing **virtual community engagements** which help move the ecosystem from its current patterns to a future state which is more **robust, diverse, agile, resilient** and **sustainable**.

These programs are highly **customizable** but rigorously **structured**, based on:

- **Program goals**

- **Target participants**

- **Framing challenge**

- **Creative / collaborative techniques**

- **Virtual technologies**

- **Desired outcome and work product**

DESIGN VARIATIONS

Hackathons

Incubators

CHALLENGE → IDEA → CONCEPT → PLAN → PROJECT → PRODUCT → PROGRAM
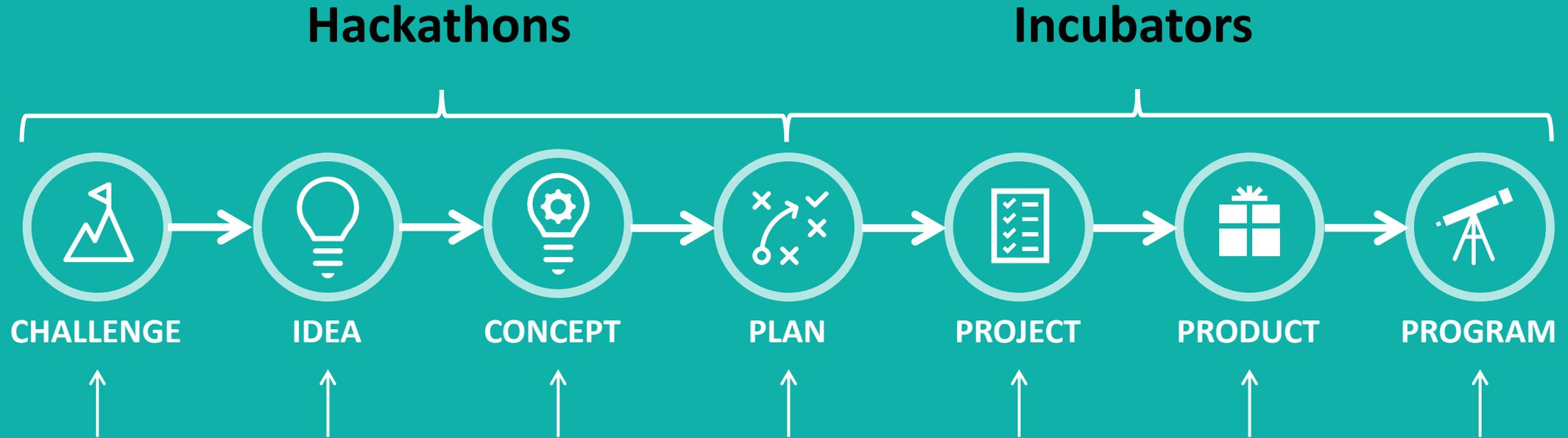
Virtual Design, Development, Peer Support or Skill-Building Workshops

A wide variety of designs are possible, engaging different challenges and participants at different phases in the problem solving and solution development process.

DESIGN TOOLS
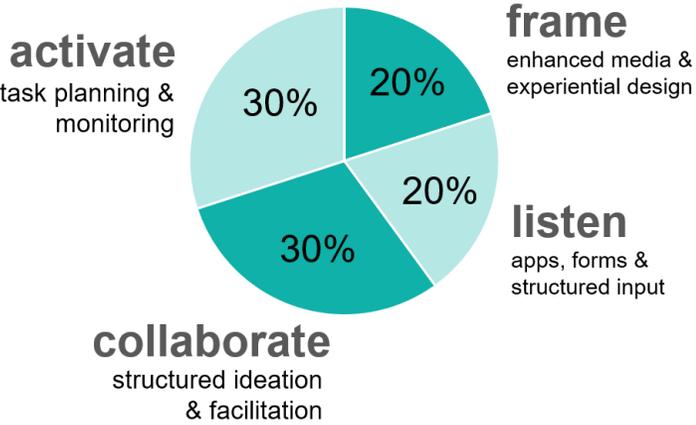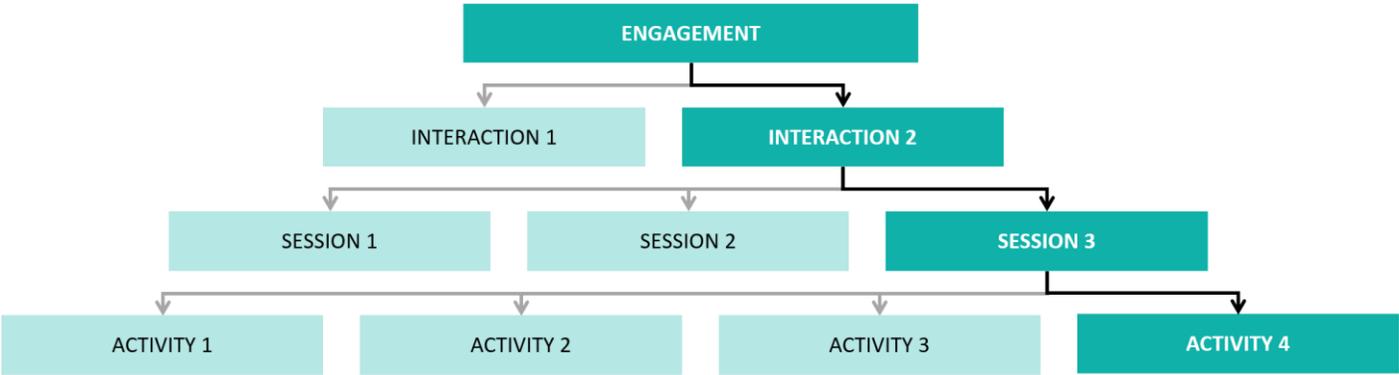
Design tools help us ensure that the conversations are participatory, productive and build towards an actionable outcome.

GOALS	INTERACTIONS & SESSIONS	INPUTS	ACTIVITIES	OUTPUTS	TIMING	OUTCOMES
address a shared community challenge	online forum and/or survey	preliminary challenge	recruit for teams	participant profiles	week 1	actionable solutions with preliminary plans for implementation
	1-on-1 interviews	preliminary challenge + participant perspective	refine framing for engagement	final challenge statement and framing	week 2	
	large group interaction with team breakout sessions	challenge statement and framing	brainstorming	10+ ideas per team	week 3, day 1	
	self-facilitated team sessions	10+ ideas per team	select idea and add concept elements	preliminary concept	week 3, day 2	
	office hours for teams (mentors, experts)	preliminary concept + expert perspective	develop concept	concept description + obstacles	week 3, day 3	
	self-facilitated team sessions + mentoring	concept description + obstacles	refine concept + overcome obstacles + preliminary plan	pitch presentation	week 3, day 4	
	public pitch session with judging	pitch presentations	public pitch + judging + people's choice	pitch decks + feedback	week 3, day 5	
	ad hoc sponsor discussions with teams	pitch decks + feedback + sponsor analysis	make decisions on sponsor support of solutions	priorities for ongoing support programs	week 4	
↑ DESIGN PARAMETERS	↑ CONTENT FLOW					↑ ORGANIZATIONAL CONTEXT

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES / SOLUTION DEVELOPMENT

COMMUNITY HACKATHONS

Open, sponsored, public "idea contests" designed to highlight specific ecosystem issues and generate actionable solutions which can be further developed.

- Monthly, bi-monthly
- 30 to 90 participants
- Up to 1000 public audience

Benefits:
- **Creates buzz and awareness around challenges relevant to the local ecosystem**
- **Engages potential sponsors (e.g. large businesses)**
- **Engages the wider community with existing support programs**

CO-CREATION WORKSHOPS

Intensive, highly structured workshops that bring together diverse community members to help teams design, refine, and implement specific solutions.

- Ad hoc or weekly
- 15 to 30 participants
- Robust collaborative tools

Benefits:
- **Surfaces needs and common interests**
- **Identifies potential obstacles**
- **Engages community members from the start and builds partnerships for long-term support**

VIRTUAL INCUBATORS

Enlist experts and mentors (locally, regionally, globally) to support local groups in further developing and implementing local solutions, from food coops to tech startups.

- Monthly group sessions
- Weekly office hours
- Local peer networking

Benefits:
- **Create support structure for local initiatives**
- **Build hubs around which to organize support and resources**
- **Strengthen peer networks and cross-industry, cross-sector connections**

CREATIVE ENGAGEMENT EXAMPLES / BUSINESS FABRIC

PIVOT CLINICS

Individual entrepreneurs brainstorm together in small teams to develop ideas for "pivoting" their business in response to Covid or other challenges.

- Three 90-minute sessions
- 20 to 80 participants
- 5 person teams

Benefits:
- **Actionable solutions for individual entrepreneurs**
- **Builds peer support**
- **Surfaces opportunities for new services, programs, or facilities**
- **Builds shareable database of solutions**

PARTNER MATCHUPS

A structured process for identifying and encouraging partnerships between small and large businesses, and between different industries and associations.

- Weekly live sessions
- 15 to 30 participants
- Matching video database

Benefits:
- **Leverages synergies**
- **Strengthens ecosystem fabric**
- **Identifies opportunities for larger alliances and communities of interest as targets for support programs**

BUSINESS HATCHERY

Pre-startup workshop – people with an idea bring their "personal team" (e.g. possible partners, family, a potential customer) to the table to refine idea and next steps.

- One 2-hour session
- 20 to 80 participants
- Self-selected teams

Benefits:
- **Gets new entrepreneurs started on a firm foundation**
- **Encourages them to build a support network**
- **Allows support groups to engage early with startups and offer resources**
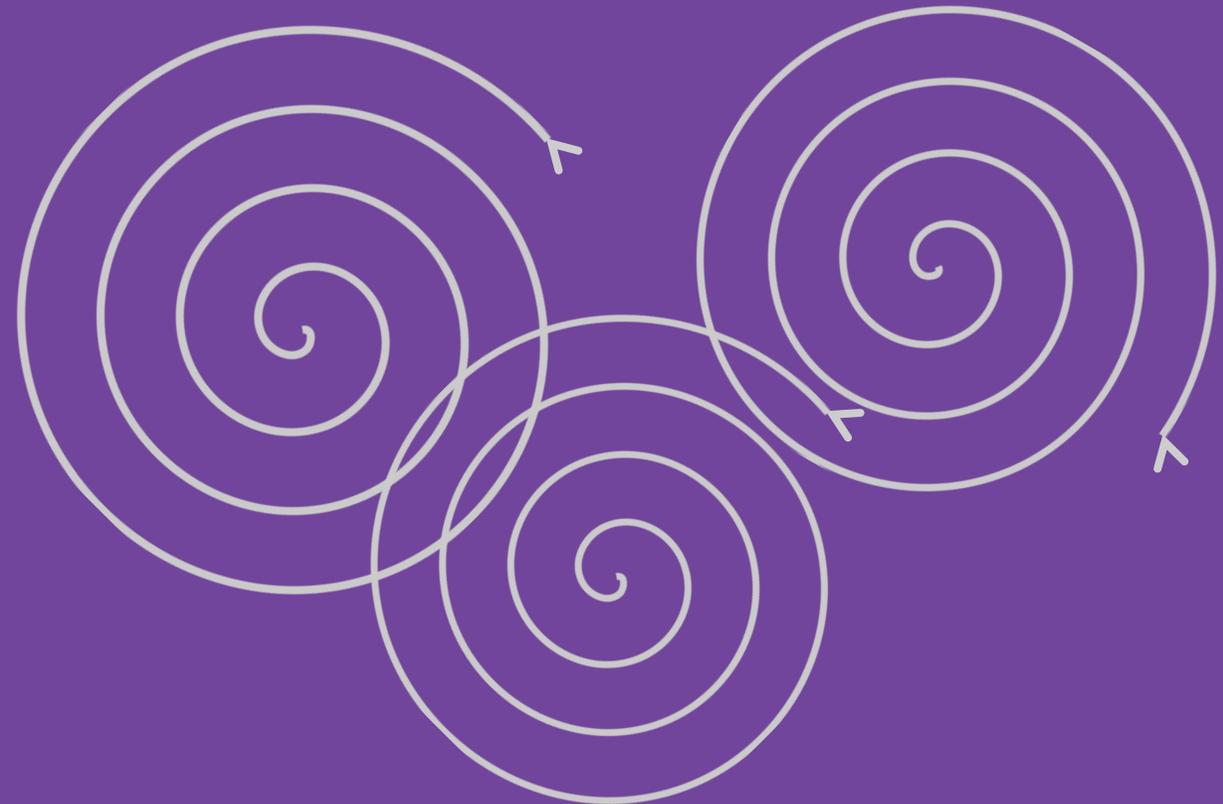
WHERE TO BEGIN / ECOSYSTEM APPROACH

OPTION 1 / SPIRAL OUT

Start with one problem defined by your initial participants and/or project sponsors, then engage creatively with a progressively wider representation of the community, gradually broadening the area of opportunity and the impact of proposed solutions, while enlisting additional participants and partners.
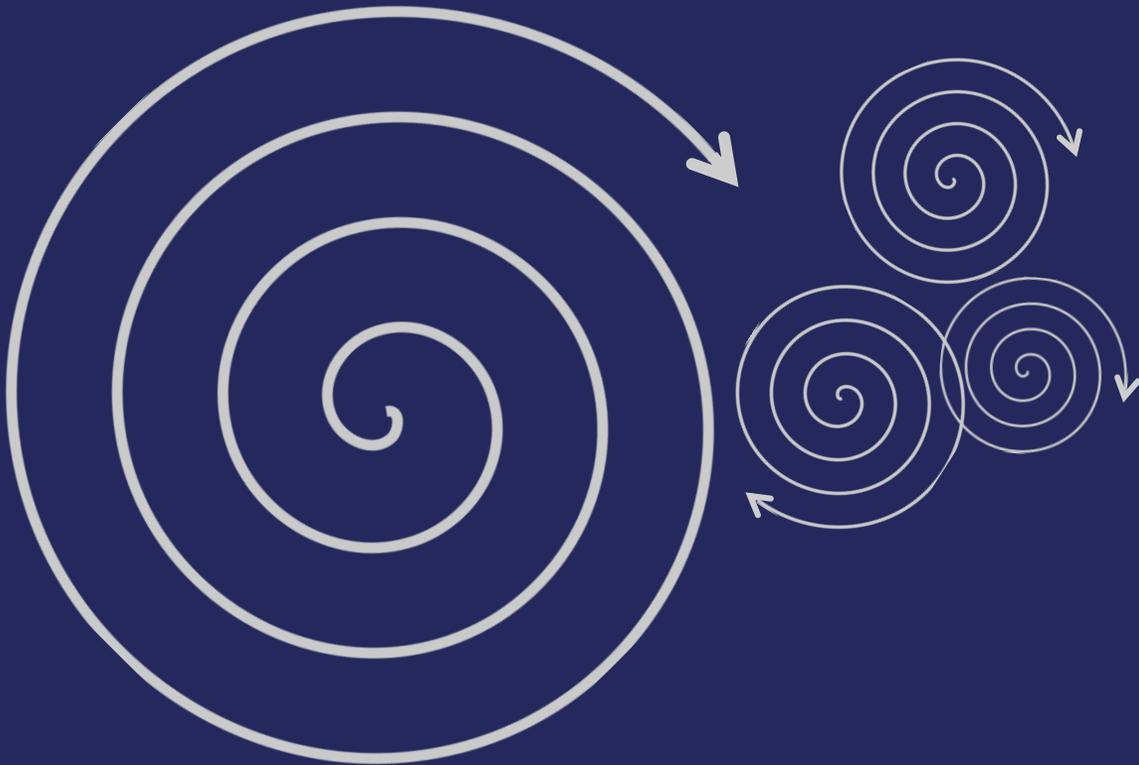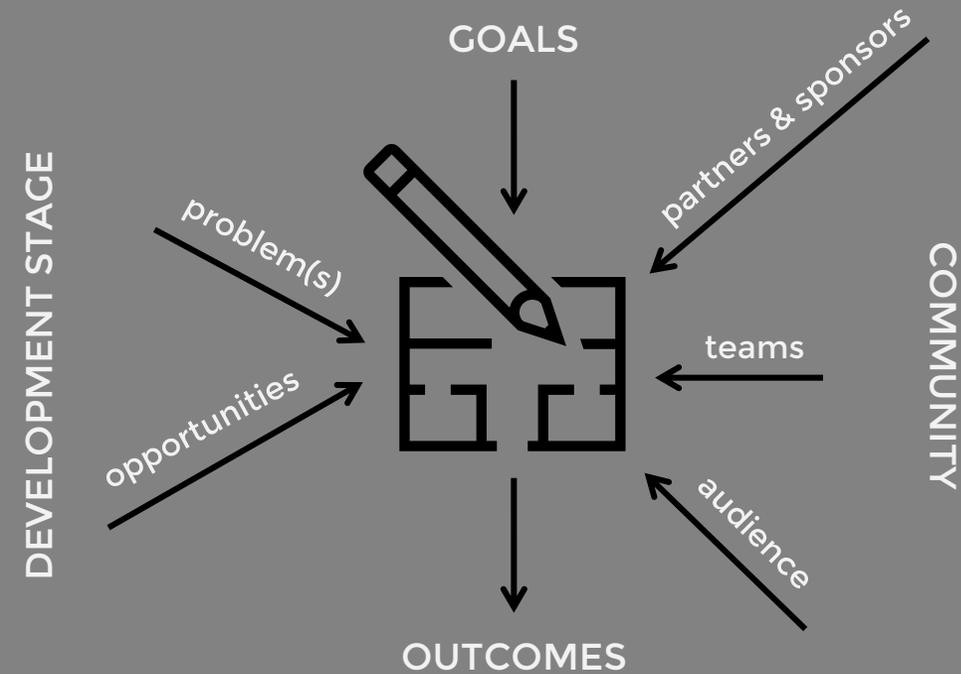
OPTION 2 / SPIRAL IN

Start by engaging with a wide variety of cohorts and partners, gradually refining the ideas that surface (e.g. a small business incubator, an alternative transit program, a food coop) but also identifying synergies between solutions and programs that support multiple initiatives.

ENGAGEMENT DESIGN WORKSHOP

DEVELOPMENT STAGE

GOALS

partners & sponsors

problem(s)

opportunities

teams

COMMUNITY

audience

OUTCOMES

A highly focused and structured 60-minute virtual workshop with key stakeholders and community members.

- It often makes sense to kick off with an initial engagement design workshop for 12 to 20 participants, including representatives of the target communities, subject matter experts, program sponsors, and outsiders with unique perspectives.

- This virtual workshop is focused on producing the first-draft design requirements for a community intelligence initiative, including:

  - **Preliminary program goals**

  - **Target groups and participants**

  - **Framing challenge**

  - **Schedule and cadence**

  - **Desired outcome and work product**

- Such a workshop is easy and quick to organize and accelerates the process by generating actionable recommendations without lengthy analysis.