Selecting Strategic Actions for Your Logic Model

This worksheet is part of the Upward Mobility Initiative's *Toolkit for Increasing Upward Mobility in Your Community*. Use it to select strategic actions your coalition can undertake to address the root causes of poverty and injustice in your community.

Selecting strategic actions is a critical part of creating a logic model that outlines how you plan to advance upward mobility in your community. To identify the strategies or activities you will undertake to achieve your desired outcomes, you may want to divide members of your team or coalition into working groups focused on specific goals. Groups should review the findings on local mobility conditions that are most relevant to their assigned goal and regularly revisit the community vision statement. If you do decide to divide the work this way, it will be critical for the working groups to continue meeting regularly as a full coalition to promote cross-pollination of ideas and collaboration among the groups and avoid silos.

FIGURE 1
Example Process for Determining Strategic Actions

SHARE
Coalition meets to share ideas and add to and refine one another's lists

RANK
Coalition meets to agree on a set of final strategic actions

REVIEW
Coalition meets to review each strategic action

SHARE — RANK — REVIEW

Working groups brainstorm ideas
Encouraged community engagement to crowdsource ideas

Working groups refine the list of ideas further

Encouraged community engagement to vet and approve ideas

Working groups identify the inputs needed to implement the strategic actions

Figure 1 shows an example process for how your coalition or team might identify and select the strategic actions that can help you achieve your desired community conditions. The large lighter blue circles indicate when the full team or coalition should meet, and the small darker blue circles are steps that working groups can complete on their own. Although this is represented as a linear process, it will likely be iterative. In this worksheet, we provide additional guidance on how your team or coalition might select strategic actions.

Review Existing Interventions and Generate Ideas

Before you set out to identify new ideas for strategies that your coalition can pursue, it's important to consider what actions are already being taken in your community that appear to be working well. Refer to our worksheets on "Cataloging Existing Interventions" and "Assessing Existing Programs" for guidance on how to do this. After you've compiled information on existing interventions and programs, reflect on the following questions to determine whether or not to include existing strategies in your plan:

- What evidence do we have that this strategy is effective? Is this evidence sufficient to support including the strategy in our plan?

  » Remember that evidence can include both qualitative and quantitative findings and doesn't need to come from a randomized controlled trial or quasi-experimental evaluation. Ideally, the evidence can show impact (i.e., Is anyone better off?), not just that enrollment or attendance rates are high.

- How might we increase this strategy's effectiveness? Does it need to be better linked with other strategies? Does it need to be better rooted in systems change and addressing root causes of inequities? Does it need to be scaled? Does it need to be better targeted? Does it need to be better resourced in some way? If it's run by a nongovernmental organization, does it need to be taken up by the government? Or are there learnings that can be shared across organizations that operate

similar types of strategies? Does it need to be evaluated by an external organization for us to learn more about its effectiveness?

After you've identified existing interventions that you might want to include in your logic model, consider the following questions to help you identify where new interventions or strategies might be needed:

- Are existing interventions addressing the root causes of inequities? If not, what sorts of strategies might?

- Is there a gap that existing interventions aren't serving? (This could be a specific group of people, specific neighborhoods, or specific issues.)

Below are some idea-generation methods that working groups can use to identify new strategic actions to consider.

Review evidence resource libraries. An evidence resource library, also known as a clearinghouse, is an online resource where a third-party organization—typically an intermediary, a research organization, or a university—has aggregated a list of evidence-based interventions or strategies. Typically, a resource library will tag each intervention to demonstrate the rigor of the evidence or the specific type of lever being used (e.g., policy, program, practice, partnership, or evaluation). Ask your research organization partner if it knows of a resource library you might reference. The following are examples of evidence resource libraries that you may wish to draw from:

- promising policy interventions for each predictor in the Upward Mobility Framework and assessments of each predictor's influence on upward mobility outcomes

- Results for America's Economic Mobility Catalog

- County Health Rankings and Roadmaps' What Works for Health tool

- the University of California, San Francisco Social Interventions Research & Evaluation Network's Evidence & Resource Library

- the National Center for Education Evaluation and Regional Assistance's What Works Clearinghouse

- the Council of State Governments' What Works in Reentry Clearinghouse

- PolicyLink's All-In Cities Policy Toolkit

Look for promising strategies from peer communities. There is great work being done in nearly every community across the country, and much of it may not show up in evidence clearinghouses because it has not been formally evaluated. But other forms of evidence can point to the efficacy of a strategy, including analytical evidence, administrative data, and feedback from citizens and stakeholders. To look for promising strategies being implemented in peer communities, working group members could search online for reports written by research organizations or intermediaries that aggregate best practices in a specific policy field. The following are a few examples:

- National Association of Counties' County Levers to Drive Economic Mobility

- National League of Cities' Cities in Action case studies

- Results for America's Economic Mobility Catalog case studies
- US Partnership on Mobility from Poverty's publications

Members of your team may also be part of professional groups or communities of practice that could be sources of promising interventions. For example, the Guaranteed Income Community of Practice convenes guaranteed-income stakeholders, including policy experts, researchers, community and program leaders, funders, and elected officials, to promote learning and collaboration in the arena of unconditional cash transfer programs. If you're working with a school or other education partner, for example, you might see whether that institution belongs to StriveTogether, a network of community cradle-to-career partnerships that regularly convenes for peer-learning exchanges.

Think-pair-share. For this method, each member reflects and comes up with as many ideas as they can independently before partnering with another group member to share and generate more ideas together. Each pair then shares its ideas with the larger group. When everyone has had a chance to share their ideas, the group can review the ideas to eliminate duplicates and ask questions about ideas they don't understand.

Out-of-the-box brainstorming. This method has group members answer the prompt, "If money, politics, and time weren't concerns, I would…" The goal here is to get people to be as creative as possible and generate ideas that haven't been tried before.

Crowdsourcing. Crowdsourcing is a community engagement method that can be done in person or online. With crowdsourcing, a facilitator can post a list of questions or key priorities that need new ideas, and community members can share their ideas. If this is done in person, the facilitator can post the questions around a large room and give attendees sticky notes to write their ideas on and post next to the corresponding questions. Some city governments have also set up crowdsourcing platforms online where residents can share ideas anonymously and others can upvote the ideas they like. Crowdsourcing ideas from frontline staff is also a great method for identifying new strategic actions because frontline staff are the ones implementing programs and practices on a daily basis. Bloomberg Cities has provided some examples of crowdsourcing in cities.

One note of caution when using a community engagement technique like crowdsourcing is to be aware of who is most likely to participate in this type of forum. People who show up to an event like this may not be representative of the general community. Specifically inviting people who have been most affected by discrimination, structural racism, and disinvestment will help you to make sure you're gathering ideas from people who will be affected by the actions you select.

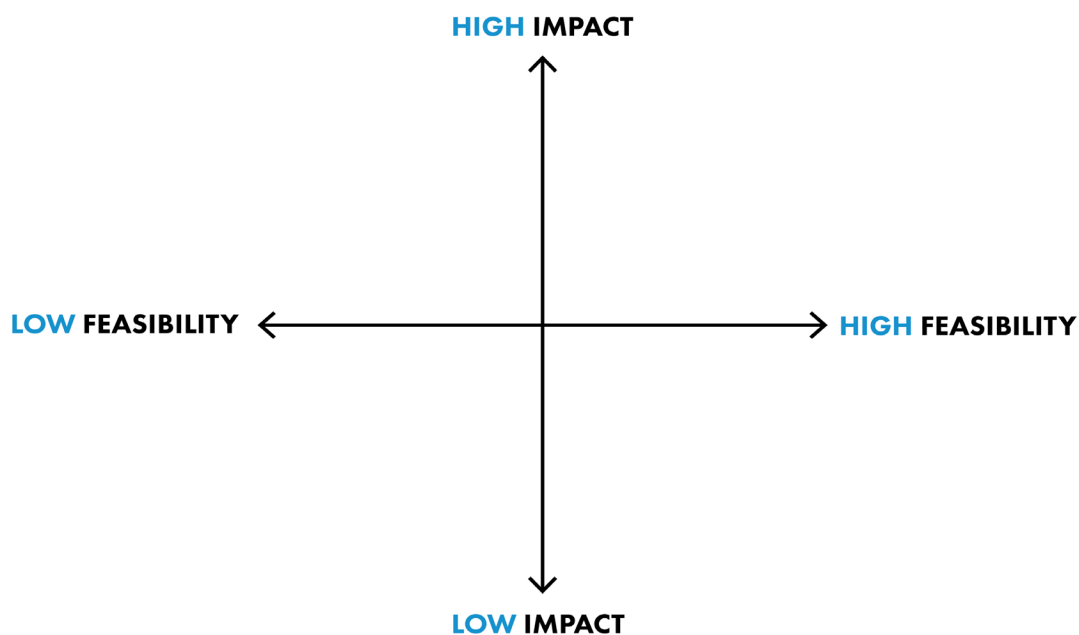## Select Your Strategic Actions

After generating ideas, your group of stakeholders should meet to refine and finalize the strategic actions that will go into your logic model. Before reviewing the merits of potential strategies, members could prepare one-page "idea briefs" that include the departments, agencies, or organizations that would be responsible for implementation (recognizing that a strategy could be multipronged and have more than one implementing organization) and the inputs (the list of resources, funding, or staff capacity) that would be

needed to ensure proper implementation and sustainability. Below are some tools that can help you select your strategic actions.

Feasibility versus Impact Matrix

To create a feasibility versus impact matrix, team members can use butcher block paper or a digital platform like Miro or Mural to draw a matrix that has two axes like the one below. One axis will describe the feasibility of a strategic action and the other will describe its potential impact.

FIGURE 2
Feasibility Versus Impact Matrix

HIGH IMPACT

LOW FEASIBILITY ← → **HIGH FEASIBILITY**

LOW IMPACT

As you think about feasibility, consider the following:

1. **Politics and election cycles**: Might the current administration adopt this strategic action? If you are in an election year, could a new mayor or county executive be convinced to continue work on this action?

2. **Funding**: Are funds available for you to use for this strategic action? If so, do they come from a source that is renewed every year, or would you need to reapply for funds to sustain the work? If funds are not already available for this action, could you obtain funds for the work?

3. **Buy-in and support**: Do you have the staff or partnerships to adopt this strategic action? Do your key organizational partners support this strategy? If not, could they be brought on board? Do you have community support for this action? Do your nonprofit and community-based organization partners have the capacity to deliver specific strategies?

4. **Infrastructure**: Do you have the necessary infrastructure (i.e., space, equipment, technology, staffing) to properly execute this strategy?

As you think about impact, consider the following:

1. **Racial equity:** Is this action going to reach the intended group(s)? Will it reduce racial and other inequities?

2. **Root causes:** Will this strategy address the root causes of a problem?

3. **Scale:** Is this action significant enough in scale to reach all of those who need it?

4. **Systems change:** Is this action going to change practices, values, or norms? Is it going to remove structural barriers and redress inequities?

Coalition members will place all of the strategic actions on the matrix. The coalition might decide to advance the actions that fall on the right side of the matrix, which will be the most feasible to implement. They might also most likely achieve the impact the coalition hopes to create or have less impact but be highly feasible to complete and, therefore, could be good quick wins.

Forcefield Analysis

A forcefield analysis is another exercise that can help you determine whether you have enough support for a strategic action. This is a tool for understanding the forces working in favor of or against a specific strategic action. The following are the steps for conducting a forcefield analysis:

- Step 1: Write down your proposed strategic action or the issue you'd like to change.

  » Draw or create a table with three columns. At the top of the table, write down the strategic action that you'd like the group to discuss.

- Step 2: Identify forces for the proposed action or change.

  » Think about the kinds of forces already driving change on this idea or that would support change. These can be internal or external (e.g., strong partnerships) and can be people, organizations, programs, policies, or conditions that will support the action.

- Step 3: Identify forces against the action or change.

  » Brainstorm the forces already resisting this type of idea or change or that would not support changing the way things work (e.g., limited resources for sustainable funding).

Table 1 provides an example of a forcefield analysis, showing how a city might boost wealth among people of color by increasing homeownership.

TABLE 1
Sample Forcefield Analysis

<u>**Potential Strategic Action: Increasing Homeownership for People of Color**</u>

	Forces for change	**Forces against change**
People or organizations	▪ Nonprofit organizations ▪ Forest City Neighborhood Housing Services ▪ Boys and Girls Club ▪ Habitat for Humanity ▪ Funders ▪ Forest City Community Foundation ▪ Forest City United Way ▪ Public Partners ▪ Some city council members ▪ Forest City Public Library ▪ Forest City Public Schools	▪ Forest City Landlords Association ▪ Some community members ▪ Some city council members
Programs or policies	▪ Continuum of care ▪ State housing development authority down-payment assistance program and flexible mortgage options ▪ Forest City Neighborhood Housing Services programs on homeownership counseling, financial coaching	▪ Zoning laws inhibiting the supply of housing ▪ Housing commission
Conditions	▪ Affordable home prices relative to the state ▪ 145 residential vacant lots in the land bank ▪ Buy-in from the city ▪ Group of renters that can be pipelined into homeownership	▪ Large median income gap between white- and Black-headed households ($60K and $30K, respectively) ▪ Largely segregated neighborhoods

Prioritization Matrix

A third exercise you might use to decide on your final set of strategic actions is a prioritization matrix. You can customize this matrix according to your coalition's priorities. Below is one example of a prioritization matrix.

TABLE 2
Sample Prioritization Matrix

Selection criteria	Community vision	Data-informed decisionmaking	Equity and racial justice	Partner buy-in	Political feasibility	Funding
Prompt	*How will this goal reflect our vision for our community?*	*How do the data support the need for this action?*	*How will this action address racial inequities?*	*Whose support will be critical for the success of this action? Do we have that support, or do we think we can gain it?*	*Is there support for this action from elected leadership and organization heads? Is this action aligned with efforts or plans from elected leadership?*	*Are there existing or potential funding streams that could support this action?*
Action #1						
Action #2						
Action #3						

Actions That Might Require Additional Information

Hopefully, the exercises above will have helped you identify a subset of strategies that are feasible to adopt, align with your coalition's priorities, change systems, and could plausibly lead to your desired outcomes. There may also be a subset of strategic actions that you recognize as likely to have a high impact but are not feasible to include in your plan at this time. In this case, you might decide to include "pre-steps" to these actions in your plan by describing what could be done now to implement them in the future. For example, your coalition might decide it wants to introduce a pilot program to help people obtain living-wage jobs, but that it doesn't have enough industry information to do so and would need to conduct more interviews and research to gather that information. The following are questions to think through in this situation:

- What were we not able to gather or learn that we would need to know before we could develop the right strategy? How might we develop a plan to get this data, information, or evidence?

- What partnerships, buy-in, or resources do we not have now that we would need to successfully adopt this action?

The following is an example of how this might result in a strategic action:

> We learned from our stakeholder interviews and workforce development data-collection efforts that a living-wage jobs pilot could be a beneficial addition to our county's workforce development programming. But we were not able to gather enough information about which industries have the best pathways for workers with low wages to advance to stable, higher-paying jobs. As such, one of our strategic actions will be to complete an industry "pathways to higher wages" study to learn more before launching a pilot. Our anchor institution partner, Forest State University, will lead the study in partnership with the Forest County Workforce Development Board. Once we have the results of the study, we will reassess whether we can launch the pilot next year.