FUTURE CITIES
CANADA

EVERGREEN

NATIONAL HOUSING STRATEGY

Canada

HOUSING SUPPLY CHALLENGE

Design Thinking Module ④

Ideate

Develop a list of possible solutions with stakeholders

At this point, your team has come up with a precise problem statement based on systems-level research of your challenge statement and interviews with stakeholders. The work you've done to date has focused on understanding, rethinking, and defining the challenge. In Module 4: Ideate, you will review what you know and start to think of possible solutions. Although you might have a potential solution this module will help ensure that the solution you present addresses the concerns of as many stakeholders as possible. At this stage, you are coming up with a bunch of different ideas that could address your problem statement. As you explore and ideate, you may decide to revisit earlier phases to provide new or stronger direction to facilitate this module.

WHY THIS STEP?

This is the space to get all your ideas out in the open before you have to get practical and see what sticks in **Module 5: Refine and Pitch**. Ideation is your transition between what you know about a problem and what concrete solutions you can deliver on. In this module, your team will get to consider what solutions are already out there, and then think beyond obvious answers, bounce thoughts off each other, and build on ideas generated by others.

WHAT TO EXPECT

This is the fun part! You're going to get messy and creative here. Enjoy it, because in **Module 5: Refine and Pitch** you'll have to get focused on your solution.

STEPS

This module describes two steps and a few activities that could be integrated into a workshop or a series of web based working sessions with members of your team and key stakeholders.

1 Impact Gap Canvas

2 Generate lots of ideas
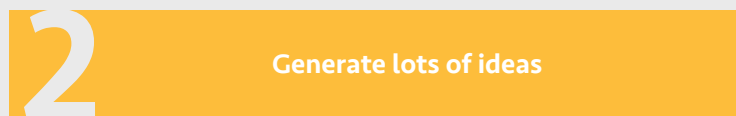
KEY CONSIDERATIONS

You'll be brainstorming (IDEO U, 2021) a lot in this module, so here are some brainstorming ground rules to make the most of what everyone on your team has to offer:

1. **Be open and suspend judgement.** Create an atmosphere where everyone feels like they can contribute. Not all ideas are going to be ground-breaking or implementable, but they could lead to other ideas or be built on.

2. **Think big. This isn't the time to be practical.** It's time to come up with wild ideas. Does the technology for this idea not exist yet? Who cares! Anything goes. Coming up with ideas that might not be possible can lead to more grounded ideas.

3. **Build on the ideas of others.** When someone comes up with an idea that isn't fully formed yet, or you have thoughts on how to make an idea even better – build on it!

4. **Remember your problem statement.** You'll be coming up with all sorts of solutions, so it's really important to keep the conversation focused on your problem statement. If solutions start to drift too far away from the challenge, bring yourselves back on track.

5. **Limit side convos.** Make sure you're working as a team in one big conversation. You don't want to miss someone's idea that you could've adapted or built upon.

6. **Go for quantity.** Aim for as many new ideas as possible. Get a lot of ideas out quickly and then build on the best ones.

7. **Share leadership.** Brainstorming doesn't work when one person is holding the pen. Make sure everyone is contributing all at once. This isn't the time to filter one another's ideas.

For more information and a variety of brainstorming tools see: *https://www.ideou.com/pages/brainstorming-resources*

1 Impact Gap Canvas

An Impact Gap Canvas (Papi-Thornton, 2018) will help you map out what solutions are already out there and what is still missing. Fill out your Impact Gaps Canvas before you all get together to do the Idea Factory exercise (see below) as a team. An Impact Gaps Canvas has three sections:

1. **Challenge mapping:** You've already done the work for this one. Fill in what you know about the challenge. Who is impacted by the challenge? Why does the challenge exist? How does the challenge fit within a larger system? Provide some history on the challenge and what you learned from your stakeholder interviews.

2. **Solutions mapping:** You may have come across some solutions in **Module 1: Understand**. Do some additional research to uncover what solutions already exist for the problem you're trying to solve. Think beyond your local context for this one to look at solutions happening globally or in other regions or municipalities. Who is already addressing this issue? How are they doing it? Where are they doing it? Are initiatives connected?

3. **Impact gaps:** Finally, think about what's missing in the context of your specific problem statement. Are there solutions that exist elsewhere that could be adapted and scaled to your local context? Is there something completely missing from the solutions landscape?

IMPACT GAP CANVAS

Challenge Mapping	Impact Gaps	Solutions Mapping
Add important information you gathered about the challenge in **Module 1: Understand**, your insights from Module 3: Define and your problem statement.	What's missing? What gaps are there between your challenge and existing solutions? Think about your local context.	What solutions already exist? Which solutions were successful and which weren't? Where are these solutions being implemented?

2 Generate lots of ideas

Option 1 - Idea Factory

This exercise involves brainstorming solutions and then determining which solutions to consider going forward. This should take about an hour and you should do it in real-time with your team, and be sure that everyone is able to participate. One person on the team should have a timer and be responsible for keeping track of time for each step, and each person should have a notebook or piece of paper so they can jot down their ideas.

1 **Review brainstorming ground rules**
Take a couple of minutes to review the brainstorming ground rules together and make sure everyone is on the same page. See if your team wants to add any other ground rules to make the session even better.

2 **Set the stage**
Take 10 minutes to review your Impact Gaps Canvas together. Review your problem statement, do a quick overview of the solutions that are already out there, and talk through what seems to be missing.

3 **Creative warm up**
Take 3 minutes to get warmed up with a "yes, and…" exercise. Have one person start off with any sort of statement. It could be as simple as "it's Wednesday night, and we're out for a walk." Someone else can pick up the thread with a "yes, and…" statement like "yes, and we just stumbled across three baby racoons." Continue adding new information to the story until the 3 minutes are up. This will get you in the mood to be creative.

4 **Individual brainstorm**
Individually, take 5 minutes to jot down as many possible solutions to your "how might we" problem statement, from Module 3: Define, as you can on a piece of paper or a notebook. Remember, this isn't about coming up with fully formed and polished ideas. You are aiming for quantity over quality.

5 **Group brainstorm**
Take the next 35 minutes of the session for a group brainstorm and be sure to capture ideas in a shared document. Go around and have each person on the team share one of their ideas one-by-one to get started. From there, things can start to get a little bit messy, but that's good. You'll start to build on each other's ideas. Someone's concept might lead you to a new idea. Just remember your brainstorming ground rules and be sure that everyone has the chance to speak and share their ideas.

6 **Finalize a list**
Consolidate any duplicate ideas from the list you've developed. If you have way too many ideas to shortlist, use a "dotmocracy" to narrow down your favourites. These will be the options you carry into **Module 5: Refine and Pitch**.

How to Dotmocracy

1. Place all our ideas on the wall, via sticky notes, and cluster them into groups.*
2. Decide how many votes each team member gets. It's typically between 3-5, depending on how many ideas are up on the wall.
3. Spend a few minutes choosing your favourite idea by placing a dot (you can use stickers) next to them on the wall. Remember to stick to the maximum amount of votes per person that you decided on.
4. Tally up the votes! The ones with the most votes are the ideas that will move to the next stage in the process.

* There are a variety of web-based wall boards (whiteboards, blackboards) that could be used to engage participants. Here are a few for consideration: Miro, Mural, ConceptBoard, stormboard, Limnu, and Sketchboard.

Option 2 - Crystallizing Initiatives

This approach builds on the Open Space and provides an alternative method to the Idea Factory. This is an organic way to engage the team and stakeholders around issues that are important to them. It works well for engaged groups who have lots of ideas and energy.

The *crystallizing initiatives exercise* from REOS Partners will help surface the different ideas that members of the group think would create new outcomes in the system they are trying to change; determines which things they themselves are willing to do; and builds work teams around these potential actions. (Grillo, 2011)

> In Open Space, participants are given the time and space to engage deeply and creatively around projects or issues that are critical to them. They collectively develop the agenda to include topics for which they have passion and are willing to assume responsibility. (Owen, 1997)

Process:

1 **Setting the stage**
- Sitting in a circle ask participants to individually review the work that the team has been engaged with.
- Ask participants to think of the beginning of one of the interventions in the system that:
  - They are implicated in
  - Addresses some key aspects of the current reality with high leverage
  - Could become the seed of a better reality
  - Would add value now
  - Give them energy and would merit investing their time

- Ask participants to write the headline of the idea, big enough so that others can read it. If they have more than one, they should choose the project they want to work on first. It's fine if they don't have an idea – other people's ideas may spark something in them. It is also ok if you they have part of a concept – other people's ideas may complement it.

2 **Sharing ideas**
- Let group members know they are going to share their ideas. Their task is to listen to the "headlines" and identify people with similar ideas to their own. They need to find their allies – those who may be using a different way to express a similar concept or may be interested in the same activity but for a different audience.
- Ask each person to stand up and read their idea in a clear voice.

3 **Self organize**
- Once everyone has read out their ideas, they should self organize into groups of people wanting to work on something similar. They do not necessarily have to agree with the other people in their team; they should have a shared interest.
- This process will take 5-10 minutes of "open space" chaos until people are settled into groups. These groups will ideally consist of 2-5 people. Split any bigger groups into smaller groups of 2-5 people.

4 **Group discussions**
- Each group should take 35 minutes to discus their area of focus and brainstorm potential solutions. Ideas should be captured in a document or on a wall board. Go around and have each person on the team share one of their ideas one-by-one to get started. From there, things can start to get a little bit messy, but that's good. You'll start to build on each other's ideas. Someone's concept might lead you to a new idea. Just remember your brainstorming ground rules and be sure that everyone has the chance to speak and share their ideas.
- Ideally each group will identify 1-2 potential solutions they would like to share with the bigger group.

5 **Share and prioritize ideas**

- Each group will share a short summary of the issue they discussed and the potential solutions (1-2 solutions) with the larger group.

- Once all the groups have shared their ideas you might find that there is some overlap between issues and solutions, which will allow you to consolidate idea. Or you might need to run a prioritization exercise.

- These will be the options you carry into Module 5: Refine and Pitch.

Resources

- *The Impact Gaps Canvas* worksheet by Daniela Papi-Thornton includes blank template, and guiding questions.

- *The Living Guide to Social Innovation Labs* from MaRS provides a list of additional tools and approaches that your team could use to generate innovative ideas.

REFERENCES

IDEO U, 2021. Adapted from IDEO.org Brainstorming Rules:
https://www.ideou.com/pages/brainstorming

Papi-Thornton, 2018. Adapted from The Impact Gaps Canvas by Daniela Papi-Thornton accessed from:
http://tacklingheropreneurship.com/the-impact-gaps-canvas/

Grillo, 2011

Owen, 1997