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Key Learnings in Moving Financial Innovations to Practice

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KEY LEARNINGS IN MOVING FINANCIAL INNOVATIONS TO PRACTICE

Thought leaders around the country are working to build healthy communities — considering how to align incentives for preventing illness and how to link patients to needed social services.

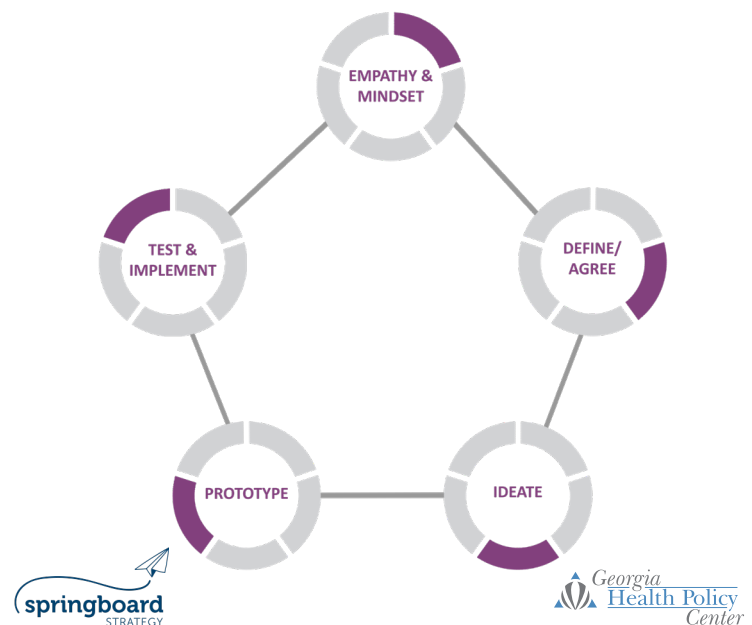
Bridging for Health: Improving Community Health Through Innovations in Financing, sponsored by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, challenges communities not only to explore creative ways to finance upstream drivers of health and wellness, but also to move these ideas to action.

“Innovation is something different that creates value and the work required to make an idea viable.” —Springboard Strategy

The Process of Innovating

The Georgia Health Policy Center (GHPC), as the national coordinating center for Bridging for Health, supports innovation using a multimodal portfolio of tools. These tools provide varying intensity of technical assistance, group learning, and evaluation support. GHPC, in collaboration with business strategists from Springboard Strategy, developed a systematic yet flexible approach to accelerating the innovation process. The centerpiece of this innovation work is the five-step innovation cycle.

The innovation cycle encompasses building intangible capacity such as stewardship, trust for partners and the process, and adaptive leadership, as well as tangible milestones and outputs. Progress can be achieved through fast but continuous learning, building a case, and creating champions of the cause. The five stages encompass:



- **Empathy and mindset:** Shifting mindsets to embrace stewardship, health equity, and systems thinking, as well as cultivating relationships and identifying community need.
- **Define and agree:** Building a shared vision of the innovation-to-action plan through an innovation agreement between partners.
- **Ideate:** Generating ideas that fit the sweet spot of a high-leverage strategy — the intersection of a community’s needs, funding opportunities, and evidence-based strategies.
- **Prototype:** Pitching a draft of the chosen idea to gain feedback from stakeholders.
- **Test and implement:** Using the philosophy of “investing a little to learn a lot,” sites test a small-scale version of the innovation to prove or disprove key assumptions.

¹ Trust for America’s Health. (2016). Sustainable Funding for Healthy Communities Local Health Trusts: Structures to Support Local Coordination of Funds Accessed at <http://healthyamericans.org/health-issues/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/Local-Health-Trusts-Convening-Summary-FNAL-1.pdf>

An Innovation: Pooled Community Wellness Fund

Experts recognize that leveraging and coordinating multiple funding streams is an important strategy for sustainably financing community health improvement efforts.¹ Up-front capital investment is necessary and may be blended and braided from diverse sources, such as government resources (e.g., a tax or designated program), philanthropic grants, hospital community benefit dollars, community bank loans, or, ultimately, reinvestment of shared savings generated as a result of program success.

Yet, identifying sources and coordinating the operation of these pooled funds is a skill that not all communities have experience with. The seven Bridging for Health sites are all serving this role as integrators — bringing partners together to develop a strategic plan; building, managing, and integrating pooled community wellness funds; overseeing program implementation; evaluating the process; and ensuring sustainability and accountability.²

Bridging for Health learned that in order for communities to make real progress in developing their pooled community wellness funds, three critical questions must be answered:



Sources: Where does the money come from?



Uses: What will funds be used for?



Structure: How do we manage, administer, and provide stewardship for these funds?

While varying in composition, purpose, and scope, all the Bridging sites are building pooled community wellness funds to address primary prevention of chronic conditions or an upstream driver of health.

Expanding Scale and Building Momentum:

Much has been learned from the Bridging for Health sites — the importance of a process to move innovation to action and the necessity of addressing the foundational questions of sources, uses, and structure when designing a pooled community wellness fund. But there is much more that can be done to disseminate the learnings, and, ultimately, catalyze a movement where communities large and small across the nation are using financing innovations to sustainably fund community health improvement efforts. These important next steps include:

- Mining learnings from communities nationally
- Packaging and disseminating support tools to help new communities and catalyst organizations design innovations in bolder, faster, and smarter ways
- Providing support to ensure current sites' pooled funds grow robustly and sustainably

Fund Headlines From Bridging for Health Sites

- Local Community Bank Plays Leadership Role in Establishing NEK Prosper! Fund
- 20-Year-Old Hospital Collaborative Turns Its Attention From Health Care to Population Health
- Chamber of Commerce Provides Backbone Support for the Wellville Exchange

“Bridging for Health has brought cross-sector teams to the table to think creatively about the concrete and specific ways to successfully achieve positive outcomes. The Georgia Health Policy Center has created an environment that fosters innovative thinking, new and unexpected partnerships, and a laboratory for testing new approaches.”

—John Auerbach, Trust for America's Health

² Kohli, J., & De Biasi, A. (2017). Supporting Healthy Communities. Deloitte Center for Government Insights. Deloitte University Press, Accessed at <https://www2.deloitte.com/insights/us/en/industry/health-care/building-and-funding-healthy-communities.html>