



Intractable problems; roadmaps to impact

Envisioning Success while Building Community

Overview

The Minneapolis Jewish community had been wrestling with the need to rethink its grantmaking for over a decade. After several failed attempts that resulted in a loss of trust across 14 grantee organizations and dozens of donors, I came in to design and drive a new robust process for practical decision-making and action.

Due to the complex history of the challenge, I knew that a success process must be saturated with active participation and co-creation by a highly-diverse range of community members.

Variables Affecting Design

Designing a local process was easy. Designing a process that would garner the buy-in and commitment required for real-world success was hard. I knew I had to pay close attention to the human variables that would create success or failure:

- a. Fear of financial risk was an active barrier to progress
- b. Community planning is, by nature, complex, but stakeholders wanted a simple solution
- c. The community was accustomed to planning from a scarcity mindset; we needed to change the culture to an abundance mindset
- d. The numbers behind the fundraising, grants, and impact had to be believable
- e. There was no way to completely remove all the unknowns; but stakeholders had anxiety about uncertainty

What participants said

Robin tenaciously sought input from a diverse group, stimulated active discussion, and provided the leadership and clarity to enable us to confidently move forward. She is masterful in her approach and dedicated to an outstanding outcome.



1. Build Relationships

I first met privately with stakeholders to hear concerns and better understand their most urgent planning needs. These one-on-one meetings set the state for genuine collaboration throughout the process – the partners felt seen and heard.

2. Set a Community Vision

I planned and delivered 12 visioning sessions, half online and half in person. To build authentic connections, activate all voices, and have fun, I incorporated a variety of facilitation methods, including activities to build trust and encourage playfulness around difficult subjects.

More than 250 people participated across the 12 sessions, where we covered a wide range of issues, challenges, and opportunities. In the end, all the inputs pointed at a primary priority for community investment—the well-being and retention of professionals delivering community programs.

3. Propose a Pilot Project

The next step was to summarize the sessions' results for the Board of Directors in a way that would encourage them to try something innovative with community funds.

I wrote a comprehensive proposal for grant-making over a three-year pilot period, with a focus on investing in community professionals. The proposal included measures of success, fundraising targets, known challenges, and potential impact. Once approved, I created a detailed work plan and project roadmap for the three-year pilot.

4. Implement

For the next year, I worked alongside the foundation's internal team to educate partners, donors, and the community about the pilot project and to co-create, with partners, grant projects that would fulfill the terms of the program. By the second year, the foundation's internal team was working independently, running all aspects of the program without my assistance.



roadmap2impact helps organizations solve intractable problems by simultaneously working on two levels, tackling:

1. **visible** work (providing a clear plan for visioning, implementation, operations, and measurement)
2. **invisible** work (attending to the human reactions and response to change)