



TOOL | REFINING YOUR IDEAS

TIME REQUIRED: 20-30 MINUTES PER IDEA

Have you ever had an idea explained to you that was not fully thought out? It happens often and can be frustrating for both parties when the idea isn't clear. Great ideas can sometimes be overlooked because they aren't well understood or described. Framing ideas early on with careful consideration will give you the ability to clearly articulate it. This is a tool that will help you do just that.

USING THIS TOOL WILL HELP YOUR TEAMS:

- Identify key features and benefits of their ideas
- Reflect on what is needed to make their ideas possible
- Articulate ideas in a way that is clear and understandable to others

OVERVIEW

This template is a simple framework that is easily modifiable to your specific topic at hand. You can change or alter different questions to best suit your topic. It can be used for a variety of different purposes such as when working with Collective Impact initiatives, when generating ideas for a group to pursue, or when engaging with the community to hear their ideas. Work through the different steps as a team to allow everyone to provide input and attain a better overall understanding of the page you are on and what is required moving forward.

THE TOOL

STEP ONE: Write down what your idea is.

My idea is ...

STEP TWO: Who will benefit from your idea? Consider who your idea impacts the most, which sometimes can be multiple parties. Be specific. Perhaps it is the municipal government in a specific city, or children living in poverty in Ontario, or adults facing homelessness in Toronto. Make sure you consider all different perspectives.

This party benefits from my idea...

1. _____

2. _____

STEP THREE: Identify the key features of your idea. These are the most important aspects that are essential to the success of the idea. Each feature must have at least one clear benefit that it provides. Link them back to who benefits from your idea. How does this feature benefit them?

FEATURES	BENEFITS OF FEATURES
1.	- - -
2.	- - -
3.	- - -

STEP FOUR: Sketch your idea and its key features. A sketch allows us to refine the details and make an idea clearer. It allows people to better visualize the idea. Use things like people, charts, or arrows to visualize your idea. Remember, it doesn't need to be pretty to bring your idea to life.

STEP FIVE: Reflect on what you will need to make this idea possible. We have included a few sample questions below – feel free to add your own!

How will we need to work differently within our organization?

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-
-

How will we need to work differently with our partners and funders?

-
-
-

How will we need to work differently with our audience?

-
-
-

What additional capacities or capabilities will we need?

-
-
-

Add your own question

-
-
-

PRINCIPLES FOR USING THIS TOOL

- Make sure that the key features you list have actual benefits associated with them rather than just stating a feature of the idea that does not result in a benefit.
- Be creative with your sketches. If you are doing this exercise as a group, encourage people to build on each other's drawings and use different techniques to get the idea across.
- Challenge your group to think differently for the questions under step five. Reflect on each question more in depth. Instead of going with your first impulsive answer, consider it in greater detail to make sure it is clear enough. Get different opinions from various members in the group.
- When exploring what you need to make this idea possible, take note of things that may be difficult and what you can do to overcome them.
- Feel free to add or adjust questions that are more specific to your idea, organization or end goal. Some other types of questions could include:
 - Action for Success – What do we need to implement this idea?
 - Barriers and Enablers – What might block implementation? What do we have that we could use to support implementation?
 - Make-or-Break – This idea will only work if...

THE TOOL IN PRACTICE

This is an example of how community organizations might use this tool to describe a potential food recovery program.

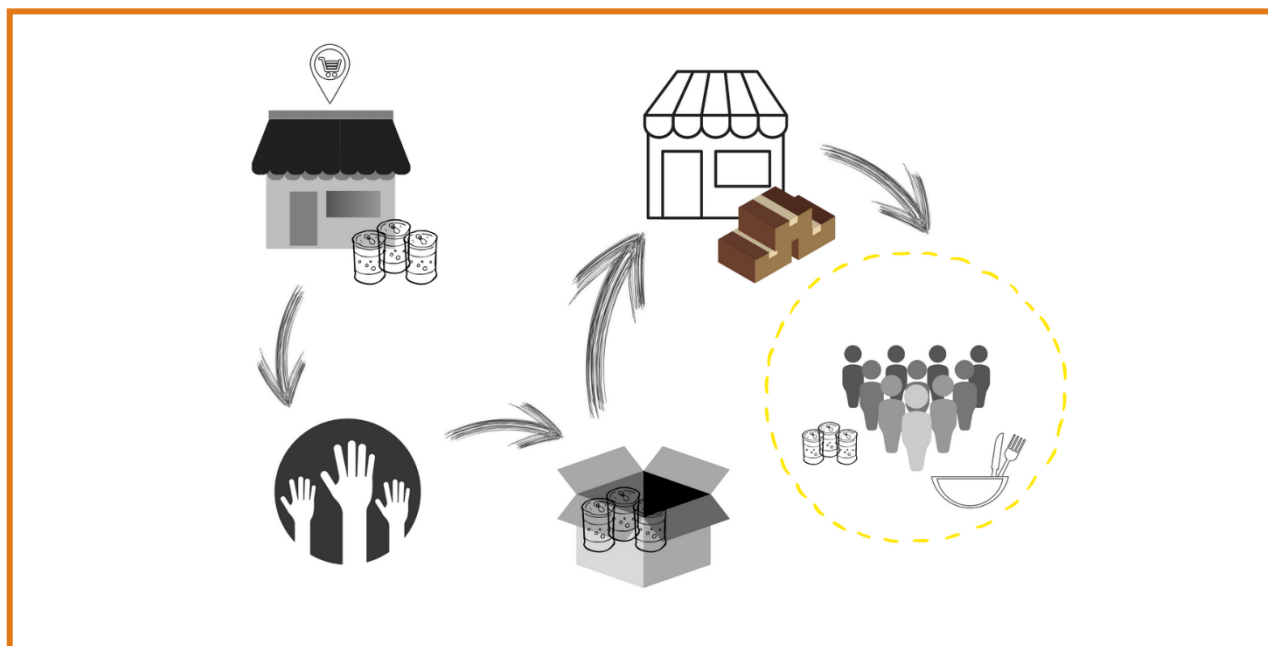
My idea is ...

To launch a local food bank food recovery program
(partner with grocery stores in the region to receive food that is not being used)

This party benefits from my idea...

1. Local people in need in the Waterloo region
2. Food programs in the region
3. Grocery stores in the program

FEATURES	BENEFITS OF FEATURE
1. Receive products from grocery stores	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimizes garbage - Uses pre-existing resources - Creates a good reputation/publicity for the grocery stores
2. Food Hampers (assemble food hampers to distribute to various food programs in the community with the resources from the recovery program)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Provides resources to food programs - Benefits local families directly - Simpler and easier to deliver rather than individual products
3. Community Support (need volunteers to help deliver and pack food)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Allows for local people to volunteer and give back - Local families in need feel supported - Creates awareness of hunger



How will we need to work differently within our organization?

- Will need to adapt to change based on different products we receive
- Ensure we have enough supplies and volunteers
- Partner with new organizations

How will we need to work differently with our partners and funders?

- Need to develop relationships with grocery stores, our new partners
- Ensure funders are aware of our new program and explain the process of how it'll work
- Clearly explain the benefits to our partners and funders of this program

How will we need to work differently with our audience?

- We will need to communicate to them where the food is coming from and which companies specifically are helping
- Need to include them in the process to see what type of food they need most e.g., meats or produce or canned goods?
- Collaborate to identify size of box needed e.g., do they drive? If not how heavy/big can it be? What is manageable? Do they need to be delivered? Is that possible?

What additional capacities or capabilities will we need?

- More storage for supplies and boxes
- The actual supplies such as boxes and tape
- A delivery system to get the food from the store to our facility

Added Question: How will we approach the grocery stores we want to partner with?

- Make sure we explain the benefits of the program for them E.g., good publicity, giving back to the community, isn't costing them extra money
- Ensure they understand exactly what we're asking for E.g., not money but food that is not being used or is damaged so it cannot be sold
- Explain to them the need for this program and who it will directly benefit E.g., lots of people need food in the Waterloo region but cannot access it, add in demographics of who the end users are

DIVING DEEPER

- Explore another tool to help you [scope your work](#) by looking at it from different perspectives
- Move forward with your idea by learning how to craft 'How Might We' questions
- Read more about the idea of [possible](#) from Paul Born