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SUSTAINABLE

A **How-To** for The New Place Startup Process

ENGAGEMENT



COMMUNITY

 THE
GREATER
NORTHWEST
AREA
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

William D. Gibson



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Mission Field



Mission

SUSTAINABLE ENGAGEMENT

Value

Proposition:
Fullness of
Life



William D. Gibson

Vital Actions



Vital resources



INNOVATION VITALITY TEAM

INCLUSION. INNOVATION. MULTIPLICATION.

Vital Partners



THE
GREATER
NORTHWEST
AREA
OF THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH



Revenue Stream



Cost Structure

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SUSTAINABLE ENGAGEMENT

A How-To for The New Church Startup Process

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Introduction

Many years ago, I had a conversation with my father. I told him about a new business idea that my former business partner and I were developing. My dad was not a business person. Instead, he was a meticulous technician, both in his professional life and personal projects. He was always interested in process and how things fit together. When I finished pitching our idea, he responded saying, “That sounds like something worth pursuing. How are you going to pay for it?” Dad’s response was not a surprise to me. He wanted to hear our strategy. If the idea was worth pursuing, he was interested in the unfolding development process, which included the meticulous details that would lead to viability.

We have to make it a priority to answer the questions, “How are you going to pay for it?” and “What is your strategy?” In the work of starting new places with new people (or cultivating new expressions of ministry within existing congregations), we have to make it a priority to address the vital details of operation and sustainability. This will require a shift. The shift couldn’t be more important than it is today, as we face many challenges and vital issues in America — the COVID-19 pandemic, systemic racism and the Black Lives Matter movement, political unrest, climate change, unemployment, the availability and affordability of healthcare, hunger and homelessness, etc.

A central attribute typically sought in potential planters/innovators is that of an “entrepreneurial spirit.” Creating new places with new people certainly demands an entrepreneurial spirit, which is evidenced through a person’s natural proclivity for innovation. Innovators have to be creative risk-takers. Yet even with the desired and necessary predisposition, this attribute pushes against the boundaries of most traditionally trained clergy — both personal and institutional. The resulting anxiety can cause a number of destructive actions — avoiding risk completely, self-sabotage, shrinking from leadership, blaming others, avoidance, procrastination, and more.

The word entrepreneur, which is of French origin and means “one who undertakes,” has traditionally been defined as “bearer of risk.” The challenge is that most pastors do not have the business experience from which to lean into this valued attribute. Because of this, it is essential to discern how to engage one’s entrepreneurial spirit from a theological position. Was Jesus entrepreneurial? He certainly was a risk-taker and arguably very innovative in his ministry. He took bold chances and encouraged others to do the same. Jesus undertook the burden of risk in order to demonstrate what it looked like to fully love one’s neighbor.

So, what does it look like for you and me to innovate, while grounded in a deep understanding of the example of Jesus? How do we leverage our assets in a way that cultivates change in the circumstances of people’s lives? How do we pivot from individual gain to an equitable community — where my life is not full until your life is

full?¹ Liberation must be a central motivator in the effort to change circumstances — the many necessary pivots from old, tired, and destructive ways of *loving your neighbor* to new, equitable, abundant ways of celebrating life together. This represents the basis of what I call **theological entrepreneurship**.

This concept is a way to describe how we need to shift an old way of thinking in order to see innovation and entrepreneurship through a theological lens. Time and time again I have heard many people tell me that the church is not a business. This is fundamentally not true. The church is very much a business; it's a nonprofit business. In order to operate, it has to generate enough income to offset its cost of operation.

While we are not selling a product, it can be received that way. Any interaction with our focus audience will likely be seen through a marketing lens. Therefore, the audience may judge our proposition as though we are selling them a product. They might quietly ask, "What's in it for me?" In the concept of **theological entrepreneurship**, part of what I push for is that we must not leverage consumer posture for our own advantage. This is how "bait and switch" has been used to do harm in the church. Remember why Martin Luther penned the 95 Theses, attacking the Catholic Church? It started with the Church's corrupt practices of selling "indulgences"

¹ This idea of "my life is not full until your life is full," is based on the Lilla Watson quote, "If you have come here to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together."

to absolve a person's sin. The Protestant² Reformation was the resulting movement.

What I am getting at here is **motive**. Will you leverage consumer posture for personal gain and influence? Or, will you subvert it for equitable community? We have to change how we exist and co-create in the world, in order to rebuild trust and the resulting relationships necessary to change the world. This kind of change involves **integrity** — both individual and corporate — and it is hard. We must steward certain practices well in order to help ensure sustainability and growth.

In the context of the Greater Northwest Area, the Innovation Vitality Team³ has put forth a change theory, which involves the three practices of **inclusion**, **innovation**, and **multiplication**. It is through these practices that we engage, check, and evaluate movement. This change theory can be summarized in the following list:

In the practice of **INCLUSION**

- If we are more culturally self-aware, then we engage difference well.

² It's also helpful to remember that the name Protestant came from the word and action of "protest."

³ The Innovation Vitality Team, serves the Greater Northwest Area, focusing on our change theory, through the practices of inclusion, innovation, and multiplication. For more information, visit: <https://greaternw.org/meet-the-innovation-vitality-team/>.

- If we are culturally competent, then we confront power and privilege and all "isms."
- If we embrace difference and uncomfortability, then we are not threatened by different expressions of faith traditions or cultures.

In the practice of **INNOVATION**

- If we have different people and voices around the table, then we are on the road to innovation.
- If we engage in power-mapping with our communities, then needed intersections are created.
- If the institution is flexible enough, then we will see new expressions — new places, new people, new leadership.

In the practice of **MULTIPLICATION**

- If disciples are present and exemplify Christ, then disciples are fostered.
- If a diversity of leaders are identified and developed, then leadership is expanded and new ways of leading are identified.
- If assets are leveraged appropriately, then sustainability and multiplication are achieved.

In order to engage our change theory through the lens of practical theology, the IV Team offers resources in four primary areas we believe are important to community engagement, operation and sustainability. These areas include:

- Intercultural competency
- Faith-based community organizing
- Asset-based community development
- Intentional multiplication

In order to shift from a programmatic tendency of congregational development to innovation, we emphasize a contextualized approach by integrating these resources. This means that it's not one area that is emphasized in the work of vitality. Instead, it's a measure of all four, shaped by context and deep listening. In order to rewire our tendency to match a program with a problem, our hope is to help you develop a variety of skills and strategies that are used together toward contextual problem-solving. Think of it like ingredients for different recipes.

We want to help you answer a number of questions: How are you going to pay for "it"? How does the work of intercultural competency fit in with shaping a vision? Why is asset-based community development important to the work of intentional multiplication? How do you engaged in deep listening that allows for the de-centering of white voices? These and many other questions come into view in the work of sustaining community engagement that makes a difference.

This resource is the result of developing and integrating the work of "creating new places with new people" during the 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2019 development seasons within the Greater Northwest Area.

The learnings from these seasons prompted the creation of this expanded “how-to” resource, which is available for planters/innovators/pastors/leaders who serve in the Greater Northwest Area and beyond. What I first published as the “New Church Startup Canvas” in 2016/2017 has advanced into the “New Place Startup Process,” which has now evolved in this book through a more specific “how-to” process. My hope is that it will help you think about the necessary pivots required to navigate old systems and structures, while providing you a framework to engage your mission field in a sustainable way.

We will begin with an overview of the model, and then address why you should consider using the process and how to use it, followed by the importance of team. Then we will get into each of the process blocks defined, which will include prompting questions that should result in action steps. Finally, we will walk through a summary and practical steps that give shape to a strategic plan for your new project and social enterprise.⁴

⁴ Note: I will frequently use the terms “new project” and “social enterprise” together, connected to sustainability and community engagement. In creating new places with new people, we have two project classifications resourced by the IV Team in the Greater Northwest Area. They are “new projects” and “vitality projects.” A new project is a new church plant, new ministry, or new community of faith launched in a neighborhood or community, or multiplied out of an existing church. A vitality project represents new movement (new ministry or new community of faith) fostered within an existing church/congregation that reaches new people. When I speak of a “new project” I am collectively speaking of new and vitality projects together. A “social enterprise” is a business model that aligns with the values and strategies of your new project and generates alternative revenues streams that support your overall efforts. It may be a direct part of your new project or may be a tethered nonprofit organization.

SECTION 1:

The New Place Startup Process

This section offers an overview of The New Place Startup Process, why it should be considered, how to use it, and the importance of team.

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CHAPTER 1

Overview: The New Place Startup Process

In 2016, I introduced the New Church Startup Canvas as a tool to offer a new approach to the planning and implementation process of creating new places with new people. The framing is much like starting a new business. This canvas/process was based on the 2004 research of Alexander Osterwalder. What he produced was a unique way to map out a business model, providing space for creativity on a blank canvas — a way of engaging the organizational process. For entrepreneurs in the startup world, it was delivered as the **"business**

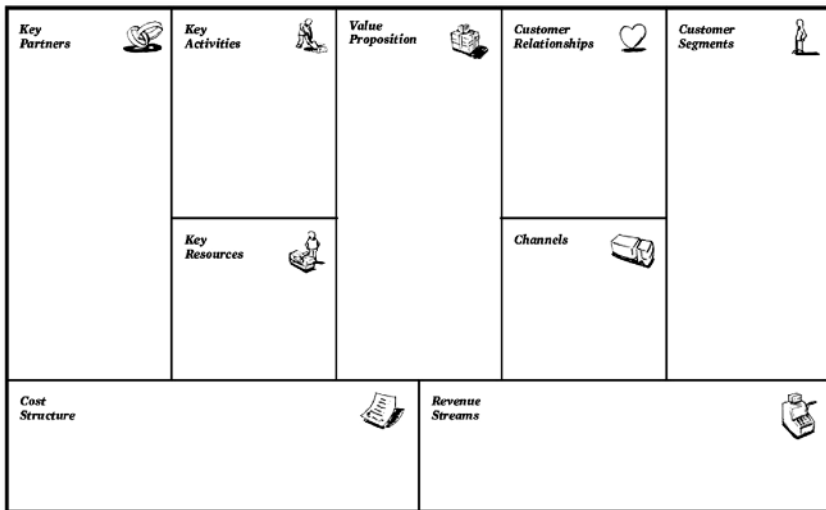


Figure 1.1. The Business Model Canvas. © 2012 Tim Clark, Alexander Osterwalder, Yves Pigneur. All rights reserved.

model canvas.” This canvas presented nine separate areas, each labeled according to an essential component of most business models (see Figure 1.1).

These blank sections included at the center a “value proposition” (the product or service), flanked on the right by “customer segments” (the people or groups the business aims to reach and serve), “customer relationships” (the types of relationships the company establishes with customer groups), and “channels” (how the company communicates with and reaches the customer groups).

Flanked on the left side of the value proposition you find “key partners” (network of strategic partners), “key activities” (the most important things that must be done to make things work), and “key resources” (physical, intellectual, human, and financial resources). Below these six were two final sections: “cost structure” (costs incurred to operate) on the left, and “revenue streams” (cash generated from customer groups) on the right.

The canvas makes a way for entrepreneurs to list out components and strategies within each section (using Post-it notes or written notes on a white board), allowing for the ideas to be rearranged, edited, and seen together in the larger picture of the business model. Initially, this provided a visual way to collect and give shape to the building blocks that can inform a more robust business plan. For the entrepreneurial planter/innovator, this can provide an exercise through which to see

the larger organizational picture of how the new project cultivates, supports, measures, and accomplishes its mission.

In order to facilitate this creative process, I took Osterwalder's business model canvas and morphed it into what I now call the **"New Place Startup Process."** (Note: Osterwalder's model has also been adapted by Ash Maurya into the "Lean Canvas," for a varied approach to new business startup.) I have appropriately changed some of the section titles to reflect the nonprofit business orientation that I feel best represents an existing or emerging new place with new people. This version of the canvas/process makes way for a practical approach to theological entrepreneurship.

The categories allow space to name and develop the essential components of an innovative business/ministry model. They can then be translated into a working strategic plan, shaped by a particular context. It also more clearly shows how a social enterprise might fit. Within the emerging business/ministry model, the planter/innovator can see how the most effective tools for a particular context will be integrated toward action steps.

How we collaborate, identify, and grow new leaders, and build new innovative systems, is critical. The approach encourages leaders to take a 30,000-foot view, while also narrowing down and identifying the practical steps that have to take place in each vital area of operation. Seeing the organization in this way should expose the right kind of questions to ask. It can drive how priorities are set,

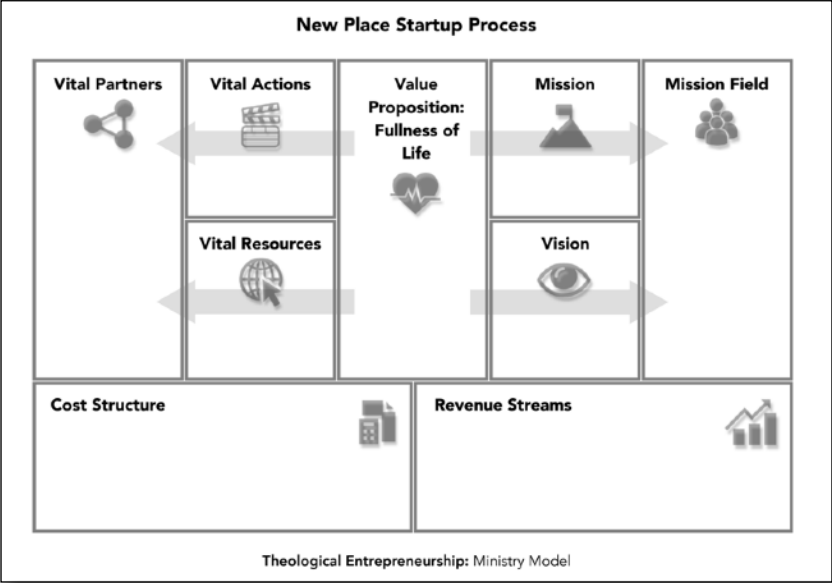


Figure 1.2. The New Place Startup Process first created as the New Church Startup Canvas in 2016

relationships are cultivated, leaders are identified, the mission field is engaged, and metrics are determined. The preceding illustration represents my version of the New Place Startup Process for innovators/planters/leaders (see Figure 1.2).

This process contains nine areas that more closely represent our work, as the church acting in the world. Each space will be explained in more detail in Section 2; however, here they are in summary:

1. **Value Proposition** — represents the value our life (individual and corporate) introduces to the world — fullness of life. This comes

from the words of Jesus. And though we are not selling a “product,” again, any strategic engagement within wider consumer culture will be interpreted through a marketing lens. Regardless, value proposition rests at the center of our work. *(Note: The faded arrows moving from the value proposition outward indicate that it permeates every part of the model.)*

2. **Mission Field** — represents the different people groups and organizations which make up the focus audience we are trying to engage — the people with which the new project/ministry aims to collaborate and co-create.
3. **Vision** — how the new project communicates with, resonates, and reaches its audience to deliver a compelling value proposition; *what can be*. This is your elevator speech — how you describe *what can be*.
4. **Mission** — how the community of faith relates to the mission field in the process of community engagement, co-creation, and fostering disciples; *what we are called/compelled to do*. This is the rally cry for the change you are co-creating in the world.
5. **Vital Actions** — the most important tasks the new project must do to make its business/ministry model work. This will always represent a growing list that changes every season.

6. **Vital Resources** — the most important assets identified that will make the business/ministry model work. These include: physical, human, intellectual, financial, and spiritual.
7. **Vital Partners** — the network of partners who have a natural connection or affinity to your new project, which helps make the ministry model work.
8. **Cost Structures** — represents all costs incurred to operate the new project and sustain the business/ministry model.
9. **Revenue Streams** — the funds generated in the process of developing, reaching, and co-creating with the mission field/focus audience.

Each of these areas will be examined throughout this resource in the pattern order for developing a new expression of ministry, new faith community, new place with new people, or social enterprise, which always begins by way of engaging the mission field. This pattern is highlighted in detail through the implementation parts of this resource. In Section 2, we will examine each of these nine areas/building blocks and the resulting actions that are a part of the business/ministry model as a whole. The explanations will help show how the integration of tools and strategies supports the larger, emerging business/ministry model and strategic plan. In Section 3, we will bring everything together and help you produce a flexible and robust strategic plan.

CHAPTER 2

Why Utilize the New Place Startup Process?

First and foremost, you do not have to use this process. But, you must have a way to develop a detailed strategic plan that embodies flexibility and ultimately brings life and sustainability to your new project. If you are receiving funding (or going after any funding) this kind of plan is critical to securing a sustainable and scalable future. However, it has to enable a cyclical process of research, experimentation, evaluation, learning, pivoting, and repeating — a positive feedback loop.

We have named for decades in our tribe⁵ that planter/innovator candidates should have an entrepreneurial spirit. However, as a denomination, we have not done well at identifying and resourcing this desired attribute. Too often, institutional pushback squelches our best intentions to embrace new ways of operating in the world. Consequently, as leaders in the church, we tend to default to familiar or expected patterns based on tradition or security. It's only been in the last few years that some of our seminaries have started to think

⁵ Speaking here of The United Methodist Church. "Our" refers to the primary audience of this book, connected to the work I tend as a part of the Innovation Vitality Team.

about innovation and entrepreneurship (particularly around social enterprise) in their curriculum.

Many potential planters/innovators that I have encountered over the years approached this work with two things in mind: money and staff. While both may be important at different times during the evolution of a new project, they are most certainly the least important initially. Most new business opportunities don't fail because of a lack of funding or staffing. It's because of the lack of research, strategy, and planning.

My colleague Leroy Barber states that “innovation happens at the intersection of difference.” This means that differences provide an opportunity — an innovative approach for a well-developed, adaptable plan. This kind of approach does not have to be weighted on the front end with high staffing costs and significant funding. Instead, it makes a way for a more lean approach that allows for learnings, and pivots in strategy, refinement, and scalability.

Since his book was published in 2011, I have encouraged planters/innovators to read Eric Ries' *The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses*. In his book, Ries argues that there are five principles that make up the lean startup approach. They include:

1. **Entrepreneurs are everywhere** — Ries believes entrepreneurs are represented by the human desire to create new products and

services where significant risk exists and growth demands innovation.

2. **Entrepreneurship is management** — Ries also believes that startups are institutions, but they require new and innovative ways of management, which are geared to support extreme risk and uncertainty. Innovation fosters growth, which means it is critical to manage innovative ideas within a new institutional structure — one that does not institutionalize process.
3. **Validated learning** — Ries also argues that startup companies are not just about new products or making tons of money. They are about spaces for learning how to build sustainable models in an ever-changing consumer culture. It's about testing assumptions, experimentation, and making informed adjustments.
4. **Build-measure-learn** — Ries believes that startups are also about process. Specifically, it's about turning ideas into a value proposition, learning from consumer response, and making the necessary pivots in strategy. He names the importance of this feedback loop.
5. **Innovation accounting** — Ries also names what he calls the "boring stuff" of entrepreneurs; how progress is measured and the work is prioritized. While attention to these details is paramount, it demands flexible, new systems that support and reframe accountability.

Within the context of church planting, I have experienced planter/innovators who have developed compelling visions in their effort to start a movement. Unfortunately, they stop there, hoping that in casting a vision (and leaning on wool!), everyone will relate and everything will magically come together. This grave error reveals the lack of a solid strategy. It fails to answer the most pressing unknowns — the most important, innovative tasks that have to be constantly tended. The strategy must also embrace failure as an opportunity to shift and adjust.

A flexible plan contains creative space for an idea to become reality. While there is freedom to take risks and jump in, there must also be a culture that can mitigate the chaos that comes with new things and the necessity for order. When organizations can remain in the uncertain space between the two, innovation can muster new ways forward.

Tension is necessary. In fact, the phrase “chaordic tension,” which was first coined by Dee Hock, the founder of Visa (and embraced by the corporate culture of companies such as Disney), is paramount for the success of startups. In organizations that constantly navigate changing markets, this phrase describes the very real tug of war that exists between the desire for order and the necessity of chaos. Liberating institutions embody this kind of corporate culture, representing an organic flexibility that is oriented toward sustainability. This is the successful union of innovation and the institution.

In the world of startup, there must be a willingness to be OK with the irregularity that makes the work unique — entrepreneurial ventures live on the edge. But, through the course of development, these ventures must carve a path toward thoroughness that both grows and sustains the organization, allowing for new processes, systems, and ordered pathways. It is absolutely important to establish this kind of culture.

Don't misunderstand me; disruptive innovation absolutely needs space. Products and services evolve through a process of optimization, where chaordic tension encourages fine-tuning and pivots in strategy without compromising the overarching vision. The same must be true for our approach to starting new projects within the church. The church's implicit (and often unrecognized) desire to institutionalize almost everything must pivot toward innovation as a standard-bearer. Theological entrepreneurship must become a part of our strategy moving forward.

If you can see starting your new project in the same vein as starting a new business, the planning can address both the scope of discipleship and the necessity of sustainability. It will allow you to operate in the important role(s) of innovator/entrepreneur. It also allows you to see your granting agency (whether represented through District or Conference sources from the church, or other granting agencies) in the same way entrepreneurs see venture capital firms.

The venture capital partnership is very straightforward. The union is represented in two partners: general and limited. While general partners do all the work, limited partners provide the funding. And typically, that is the end of the involvement of limited partners, outside of an expectation of a good return on investment (ROI).

The advantage you have if you are starting a new project in the GNW (or other supporting denomination) is that the church offers a broad amount of additional assistance besides funds. Such assistance can include coaching, mentoring, supervisory support, resourcing, specialized consulting, training, and collaboration. This is a tremendous advantage in the startup game, which means that you automatically have a number of vital partners when you develop a robust and flexible plan.

The ROI of your funding source in the church represents a viable project that both accomplishes its ever-emerging mission (fostering disciples) and establishes sustainability and multiplication. This is a very different expectation from what I have experienced from venture capital partners breathing down my neck for a profit. And, the co-creating that can happen with the church provides a feedback loop that continues to birth innovation. All the while, this helps shift the culture of what it means to *be church with* our neighbors.

The bottomline is that if you have a dream, you have to figure out how you are going to pay for it into perpetuity. This will require multiple revenue streams, which will include many (if not all) of the

following: startup funds, grants, congregational giving, subscriptions, partnerships, social enterprise, and even endowments. Your strategic plan is incredibly important and will require constant attention. It provides the fuel that keeps the engine of your ministry operating at peak performance and accomplishing the mission.

Why utilize this process? Because the purpose for the New Place Startup Process is to help you identify and integrate the kind of culture and organizational structure necessary for starting and sustaining new places. For those of us who have not leaned into our entrepreneurial spirit — or those who have not been in a space where this attribute has been encouraged — the process can simplify a compartmentalized approach that makes integrating tasks and strategy straightforward.

CHAPTER 3

How to Utilize the New Place Startup Process

I will explain how to engage each building block separately in the next section. That explanation will not only integrate our primary resourcing — intercultural competency, faith-based community organizing, asset-based community development, and intentional multiplication — but also provide starter questions and instructions. This will generate an action list for each building block of the process. However, before we jump into that work, we should understand how to use the process as a guide.

First, print out a large copy of the startup process, or plot it on a poster board or dry-erase white board. Begin to consider each building block and how they relate. You should see the right side of the process as the **delivery** vehicle (**mission field, vision, mission**) for your project, and the left side of the process as the supporting or **operational** side (**vital actions, vital resources, vital partners**). Each of the blocks you engage should begin with a basic pattern, where the first informs the next, and so forth.

The following illustration (Figure 1.3) shows the beginning of this brainstorming, categorizing process. When you exhaust each list

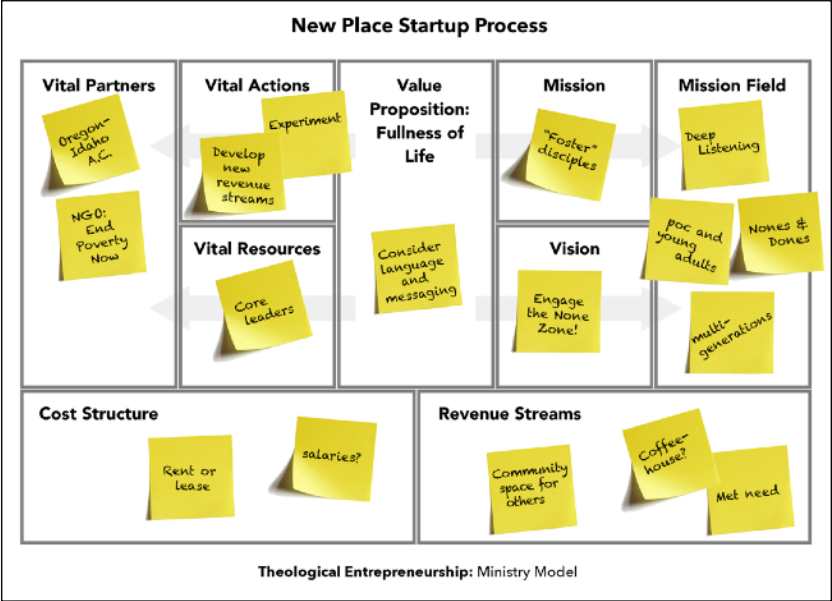


Figure 1.3

under each of the nine building blocks, your canvas should be well populated with ideas/considerations.

As you consider your emerging ministry model, you will have a better sense of many patterns among the building blocks and how they give shape to your strategies and priorities. For instance, the activity of deep listening, within your mission field/audience, will give shape to how you cultivate and communicate a vision. How you collect and cast vision can also help you understand various components of the mission, consequently helping you identify the vital actions that need to take place. Identifying the vital actions will help you determine

what resources are needed (and those you have), what partners are necessary, and so forth.

As you begin to record all of these tasks and potential or existing partners, you will be able to identify your cost structure and how it places demand on your revenue streams. The illustration below (Figure 1.4) shows the previous description as a pattern on the startup process. Each pattern may be different, based on a number of factors, such as your mission field, the data you collect, the assumptions you test, the actions determined, the revenue streams needed, etc.

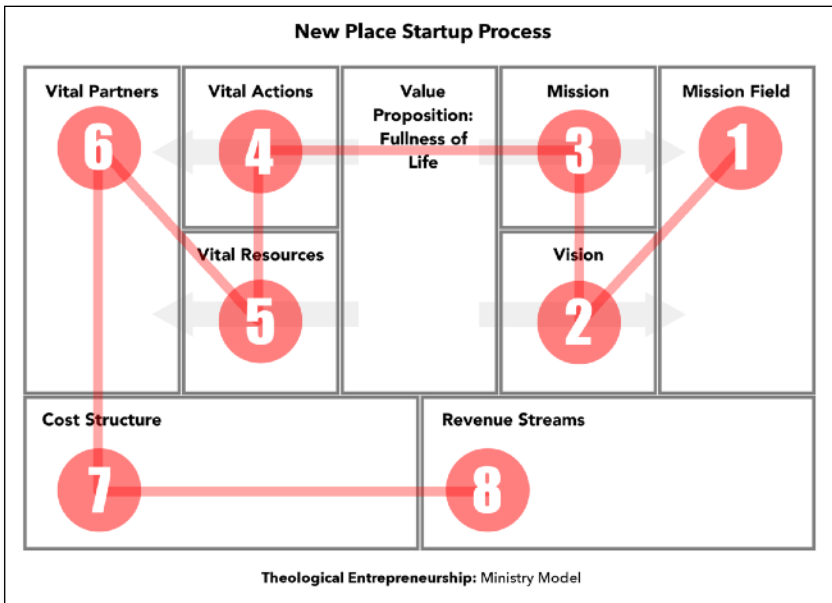


Figure 1.4

While the value proposition of “fullness of life” does not change, it does influence and shape both the development (vital actions, resources, partners, and cost structure) and engagement (mission, vision, mission field, and revenue streams) of the business/ministry model (hence the arrows moving outward from the center). This exercise, made available through the New Place Startup Process, will help you see the mission and ministry of the church from a crisp vantage and through a new lens. The process begins with deep listening, engaging the very people you hope to reach and with whom to co-create. Everything is built on these discoveries.

What are the next steps?

Once you have spent time considering each of the nine building blocks of the startup process and see how they related to and inform one another, you will have much of the information needed to begin developing (or enhancing) a robust plan. You can also discover what you are missing, your areas of weakness, the underused assets, collective big dreams, the real obstacles, and a much clearer picture of your mission field. All of this information is then used to set your priorities for next steps.

Utilizing the New Place Startup Process will help you construct the kind of flexible strategic plan necessary to accomplish effective engagement in your context. Before you dive into strategic plan development, which will be framed in Section 3, let us first move toward the importance of a solid team.

CHAPTER 4

The Importance of a Team

You cannot do this work alone. You can initiate it, but to think you can take on this work, scale it, and create something sustainable and meaningful on your own is a fool's errand. While the necessity of a team should go without saying, I want to take this brief opportunity to remind you that even Jesus didn't initiate change alone.

We see in Matthew 4 that Jesus had left the religious center of Jerusalem and made his way to the margins of the region. One day while walking on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, he encounters two brothers — two professional fishermen — who were throwing their nets into the water. Jesus clearly noticed that they were good at what they did for a living. And he basically says to them, "Hey, come follow me and I can show you how to use your gifts to gather and empower people."

It's also important to note that Jesus began his proposition with what I call a rabbinic invitation, stated through the words "follow me."

These words were not a casual greeting or icebreaker. Instead, they were significant. Essentially, it was like saying to Peter and his brother Andrew, "Hey, I see it in you that you have the potential to do what I do." That was immensely meaningful to the brothers. Why? Because they hadn't made the cut. Jesus saw the potential in them.



Photo credit: You X Ventures, [Unsplash.com](https://unsplash.com)

What cut am I referring to? The words “follow me” were a proposition from a rabbi to a student who demonstrated great potential. In Jewish culture of Jesus’ day, it was the responsibility of the father in the household to begin educating his sons. At around age 5 they entered the equivalent of elementary school, where they learned from the written Torah. At around age 10, they progressed to the oral Torah. And around age 15 the most gifted were invited to study the Halakhah or the rabbinic law.

While formal education ended at around age 12 or 13, which was the age that most children were expected to go to work, the most gifted students could continue their studies, if they were propositioned. In other words, if they were knocking it out of the park and making

straight A's, a rabbi might approach them and proposition them. This represented a rabbi/disciple relationship, whereas the rabbi would teach the disciple, as the student progressed to do what the rabbi does. This relationship began with the words "follow me," a phrase that came from a display of respect, as disciples always followed at least one step behind their master. The disciple "followed" the way of the rabbi.

Those students who did not show great potential in school were relegated to enter the workforce, which was often connected to their family's business or field of expertise — commercial fishing, carpentry, tax collecting, etc. The words "follow me" were significant. How do you think the first disciples of Jesus heard this? They hadn't made the cut. They were engaged in the family business. No one had seen great potential in them, until Jesus walked into their lives. No wonder Matthew records their response as having "left their nets at once and followed him" (Matt 4:20, NLT). A radical newcomer had pointed out that their gifts could be offered in fresh, new ways.

This is how Jesus began forming a team. He started at the margins, with candidates who embodied the gifts he knew were needed to accomplish a specific mission. It was as if he wanted to spark a grassroots movement. He knew what he was looking for and he tapped people who brought the right gifts and experience together. Then he began helping them discover how they could join in something that was much larger than themselves. Jesus started with

12 unique individuals on his mission to change the world. He had a purpose. He wanted to empower others. Be like Jesus.

Things to keep in mind when building your team:

You don't have to have 12 to start, but you definitely need a team you trust, and with whom you collaborate, cast your vision, and refine how you articulate the value proposition.

1. **Understand what you are after** — Knowing your vision and mission is the centerpiece to building a solid team. If you do not know what your end-game is — your mission — you will not be able to engage and partner with committed team members.
2. **Culture and intercultural competency** — Not only is it important to understand culture from multiple perspectives — organizational culture, cultural self-awareness, racial and ethnic identities, among others — but also it is vital to the formation of your team. Intercultural competency is foundational to the work we do and, therefore, must rest at the center of forming a solid team. Your team needs to reflect the people groups you are trying to engage and your communication and decision-making processes must reflect equity.
3. **Gifts and experience** — You and I are incapable of doing everything, which also means there are some areas in our skill sets that are either deficient or nonexistent. Surround yourself with

qualified people who are gifted in ways you are not. Experience matters.

4. **Refine your vision** — Culture is always emerging — the world and our collective circumstances are shifting. As you navigate the ever-changing landscape, and while also refining your vision, make sure you stay focused on the goal. And make sure this translates to the areas of focus for each of your team members.
5. **Celebrate the opportunities difference brings** — It is vital to become hyperaware that there are new ways of doing, thinking, and being in the world. A diverse team that is fully engaged brings about diverse opportunities and innovative strategy.
6. **A spirit of collaboration** — While good team members are driven, egos must be checked at the door. A spirit of collaboration is paramount for an effective team. Strong teams fail together and succeed together. It's not about you.

Discussion and Planning Questions Related to Building Your Team:

1. What is your plan for identifying potential leaders?
2. How are you building intercultural competency into your leadership?

3. What is your plan for addressing issues of power and privilege and for engaging black, indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) voices or other non-dominant cultures on your team?
4. How will you cultivate safe and courageous space for people to join into the movement?
5. Describe what a spirit of collaboration might look like in your new project/community of faith.

SECTION 2:

Process Blocks Defined and Engaged

This section offers an overview of each process block, along with questions/considerations, categories of connections, and helpful discussion and planning questions for each block. These can then be integrated into the whole of the process.

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CHAPTER 5

Value Proposition: Fullness of Life



Within the context of the New Place Startup Process, the value proposition⁶ is the value we live and re-present to the world. This comes from the words of Jesus (see John 10:10 for starters). And though we are not selling anything, again, any engagement with the wider community will be interpreted through a marketing lens by consumers in a consumer culture. The goal is to pivot from consumer to co-producer.

For the Christian movement, and in keeping with Jesus' teaching, we believe a starting point can best be encapsulated in the phrase "fullness of life." At the very core of our humanness rests an uncontrolled desire to embrace all that we feel life is supposed to represent, even when we do not fully know what that might entail. It is even more important to recognize that this life is about liberation — again, that my life is not abundant or full unless your life is abundant and full. This proposition emphasizes the corporate/communal hope rooted in an individual decision. The value

⁶ The "value proposition" noted here is somewhat ambiguous. Since we are covering both new projects and social enterprise, for new projects the value proposition falls under "fullness of life." For a social enterprise venture, it may be specific to a product or service offered in connection to a supporting revenue stream. Regardless, the value proposition is a "promise of value" to the consumer/focus audience.



Photo credit: Austin Schmid, unsplash.com.

proposition of the church should be apparent through every way the church engages its community — inside and outside social circles — and should find alignment with the biblical narrative. And, it must take cultural context into consideration.

When it comes to culture and context, how you shape the language you use to represent the value proposition is driven by what you know and learn of your mission field. No company would blindly offer a product to a particular group without interacting and collaborating with them. Again, in consumer culture, where our engagement will be evaluated through a marketing lens, we have to intimately know our mission field in order to translate the value of fullness of life. There are many considerations to be addressed, which can be framed through some of the following questions:

- What have you learned about your mission field that would shape the language you use to express value? (list of characteristics)
- What value does the church have to offer in representing “fullness of life”?
 - Other ways to frame the question: Do people on the outside actually see fullness of life being lived out by the church in a particular community/neighborhood/context?
 - Do people on the outside experience the church improving the circumstances of their neighbors?
- How do the people groups gather their information and communicate with and engage one another?

It is important to name that “fullness of life” is not connected to the idea of prosperity, especially since we are reframing this for a consumer culture. Instead, it represents the fullness of Christ’s presence in every aspect of an individual’s life and how that life (personal) impacts and enhances the lives of others (communal). The **value proposition** can be considered through its biblical characterization and its cultural formation. These areas find multiple points of convergence.

Characterization of the **value proposition** “fullness of life,” includes the following biblical characteristics, through the fruits of the Spirit (see Galatians 5:22-23):

1. Love
2. Joy
3. Peace
4. Patience
5. Kindness
6. Goodness
7. Faithfulness
8. Gentleness
9. Self-control

How are these characteristics evident in the way you frame and articulate the **value proposition**? As fruits of the Spirit, they are an outpouring expression of something that is deeply held. They are distinguishing features that point to something larger.

Formation of the **value proposition** can be described through the following perspectives and how those in the mission field may interpret the value (the first four are familiar to Wesleyan theology):

Christian perspective:

1. Scripture

- What does the Bible illuminate in the value proposition?

2. Tradition

- How does tradition shape the audience's understanding of the value proposition?
- How can this be re-interpreted?

3. Experience

- In what ways does the audience's known experience (personal and corporate) influence their interpretation of the value proposition?

4. Reason

- How does your own intellectual approach influence your actions around embodying the value proposition?
- How do you know your intellectual approach is even correct?

Community perspective:

1. Hospitality

- Is this a safe space where one can bring her/his/their full self/selves?
- 2. Justice, equity, and racial reconciliation
 - How does social justice both shape and represent the value proposition?
- 3. Disruptive innovation and creativity
 - Are new ways forward given room to emerge and actively disrupt the status quo?
- 4. Contextualization and translation
 - In what ways are you allowing context to dictate how the value proposition is communicated and positioned?

Consumer perspective:

- 1. Branding, positioning, and design
 - How is the value proposition experienced through the aesthetics of images, words, and spaces?
- 2. Excellence and competitive advantage

- Consumers are conditioned to look for quality and the best value. How will this inform or subvert the interpretation of the value proposition?
3. Communication strategies
 - Knowing how your audience gets access to information, communicates with others, and shares experiences, is essential. How will this shape the way you communicate with and learn from the mission field?
 4. Audience perception (does the *talk* match the *walk*?)
 - How will your understanding of a consumer perspective help you subvert skepticism and embrace integrity?
 - Another way to think about this is through the lens of "hypocrisy."

Discussion and Planning Questions Related to the Value Proposition:

Now it's time to take a step forward.

1. Considering how we have examined the Value Proposition of "fullness of life," how would it be shaped for your own context?

2. Your strategy must be informed by listening to your mission field.
Good one-to-one conversations are critical (see the next chapter, which includes one-to-one meetings).

CHAPTER 6

Mission Field



Do you really know your neighbors? Are you actively building relationships with new people? Are you learning new things about the world through contact with new people? Do you understand the cultural dynamics within your wider community — the many cultures and subcultures represented, which shape people, traditions, and cultural norms?

When we integrate a faith-based community organizing approach to our work, we not only strive to change how we see our communities, but we also change the way in which we engage and learn.

Community organizing moves us from a position of isolation and self-interest to a collaborative approach that embraces the whole.

In his book *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, Peter Block sets up the provocation. He writes:

The essential challenge is to transform the isolation and self-interest within our communities into connectedness and caring for the whole. The key is to identify how this transformation occurs. We begin by shifting our attention from the problems of community to the possibilities of community. We also need to acknowledge that our wisdom about individual transformation is not enough when it comes to community transformation. The purpose here is to bring together our knowledge about the nature of collective

transformation. A key insight in this pursuit is to accept the importance of social capital to the life of the community. This begins the effort to create a future distinct from the past.⁷

The **mission field** represents the different people groups, neighborhoods, communities, and organizations which make up the particular audience with which you hope to co-create. The command to “love your neighbor” should prompt a different framing of mission field engagement. Every neighborhood reflects a unique context where people groups gather for social, economic, professional, and personal reasons. Your neighbor may have moved to the area due to a job transfer and may have come from another part of the world. They may have moved by choice because of culture, climate, or even threat. And, of course, your neighbors may very well be native to your neighborhood and you’ve simply never met them.

This means that each mission field is nuanced by our human interaction, while our assumptions are drawn from the many biases and lenses through which we view the world. Though there may be general reasons people are found together in certain areas (e.g., political preference, ethnicity), there also may be varying degrees that are not clearly perceived. Without a better understanding of our neighbors, a number of challenges will develop.

In order to better understand common ground, behaviors, priorities, and other attributes, the church must see the audience in

⁷ Peter Block, *Community: The Structure of Belonging*, (Oakland: Berrett-Koehler, 2018), 1.

multicultural dimensions. Reviewing basic demographics will shape perception, requiring you to unpack your assumptions. When we put people in compartments, we can make the mistake of sweeping assumptions (e.g., millennials are self-absorbed and entitled, Gen-Xers are the slacker generation, or Baby Boomers are the real problem). Surface assumptions and implicit bias can sabotage your strategies. This is why we have to uncover our assumptions and engage our mission field through deep listening. Relationships are key.

While broader information and characteristics can be discovered through comprehensive demographic studies, one-to-one listening is a practice of community organizing that exposes more than data. In this work you will find the heartbeat of a community, originating from the passion and challenges of the people who live there.

Demographic information can give you a snapshot, but it needs to be verified and made more robust through the practice of listening. In our Greater Northwest Area context, we utilize MissionInsite to assist us with a wide array of demographic reports. MissionInsite provides several informative reports that will help shape ways to test your assumptions.

There are a number of considerations when approaching your mission field, including:

- Who lives in your neighborhood?
 - Are there people groups with which you do not relate? Why?

- Where are BIPOC voices in your setting?
- Does your new project reflect the diversity of your neighborhood? If not, why not?
- How culturally and ethnically diverse is the mission field?
- What are the things you do not know about your mission field/audience?
- What is the greatest identified need?
- Who holds the power?
- How would you assess the risk the audience is willing to take together?
- What inspires your neighbors?
- What groups or organizations have successfully developed relationships with your particular audience?
 - How can you learn from and/or partner with these groups/organizations?

As you reflect on your mission field, think about how the categories below intersect and help you categorize, prioritize, and understand people groups:

- Demographics
- Ethnic difference (multicultural)
- “Nones” (no religious affiliation)
- “Dones” (done with traditional church/religion)
- Those people outside the communities of faith

- Those people inside the communities of faith
- Those people outside your social circles
- Those people inside your social circles
- Ages and stages (multi-generational)
- Other sociological considerations
- Theological positions

If we think about Jesus' approach, instead of the religious center he began his ministry with people at the margins. His interaction was purposeful; he was interested in relationships that ultimately moved people, leveraging their passions and expertise to create a more vital community and lived experience.

Jesus understood what he was about and to what end his engagement with people should lead. He leveraged his interactions with people, in order to use those learnings to shape how he taught, led, mentored, and communicated with them. His work was intentional and toward a particular end.

Gathering people together, empowering their gifts, and mobilizing them at the grassroots level to act together are the basic tenants of community organizing. The initial interaction and learning within our mission field actually begins by developing relationships that matter. Even for Jesus this was personal; it began with one-to-one interaction, listening, reflection, and action. Our interaction within the mission field is the bedrock for building a ministry model that actually

makes a difference and changes things in our communities. What we learn, the relationships we establish, and the actions that develop, point toward *what can be* — a vision.

However, when it comes to deep listening, there is an important consideration: One-to-one interaction cannot be motivated from the position of numbers. In other words, your one-to-ones must come about from a position of sincere curiosity — an authentic desire to establish a relationship with the person, one that can co-create. It's not based on trying to convince one out of 10 people to join your movement.

Remember, this is not about selling the person anything. It's about listening in order to learn about their hopes, dreams, passion, gifts, needs, contributions, etc. Meaningful conversation means that you listen more than you talk. Community organizing tools are for the purpose of building community. They are for engaging, learning, and empowering people to act. And, they can help give shape to an emerging vision that is compelling — one that actually starts a movement.

Within our context, there are two familiar community organizing groups:

- IAF Northwest — a regional network of the larger Industrial Areas Foundation, a community organizing alliance that works “to build individual civic leadership, strengthen its member organizations, and to serve as a vehicle for these

members to act in the public arena with sufficient power for the common good.” For more information, visit: iafnw.org.

- PICO — a national network that focuses on community development and improving lives through “faith-based community organizations working to create innovative solutions to problems facing urban, suburban and rural communities.” For more information, visit: faithinaction.org.

Examples and Principles of One-to-One Interviews

Not to sound repetitive, but one-to-one conversations are not used to manipulate others nor are they used to convince someone of something. They are opportunities for deep listening and a tool for building authentic relationships. These conversations, allow you to test and set aside your assumptions. Not only can you gain insight as to what motivates other people, but also you will identify existing and future leaders in your neighborhood/community.

1. **One-to-ones (again) are not about selling anything** — You are not pitching your vision or even naming a task for someone to engage. You should focus on the person and their story.
2. **One-to-ones (again) are about listening** — Your objective is to try to see and understand the world from the other person’s perspective. You should do more listening than talking. Model a rule of 75% listening and 25% talking.



Photo credit: Cristina Morillo, [pexels.com](https://www.pexels.com)

3. **One-to-ones are short** — Your initial meet-up should not be a major commitment for the other person. Name the length of time you would like to meet when you make the invite (30 to 45 minutes).
4. **One-to-ones are not for therapy** — Your conversation partner is not your therapist, nor are you your conversation partner's therapist.
5. **One-to-ones help uncover tension** — By listening and beginning to see the world from the other person's perspective, you will be able to discover what people are concerned about in their neighborhoods.

6. **One-to-ones are not recruiting sessions** — Your deep listening sessions are not a time for recruitment. Resist the urge to invite the person onto your team. Listen for a more robust story. Be patient.
7. **One-to-ones (again) help identify leaders** — By listening to the other person's story, you can discover what they are involved in and what leadership roles they have held in their work.
8. **One-to-ones are not about fixing things** — These sessions are not about helping an individual solve a problem. Resist problem-solving and focus on hearing the other person.
9. **One-to-ones are about being fully present** — Deep listening is an engaging activity. In addition to listening well, make sure you pay attention to your body language and make eye contact, when culturally appropriate to do so. Honor the other person's engagement.

Discussion and planning questions for the mission field that can shape the value of "fullness of life":

1. Discuss the learnings of the mission field and how they shape the way you communicate about the value proposition.
2. What values are identified and how are (or how will) those values be embodied?

3. What is your plan for meeting new people?
4. What is your plan for listening to place?
5. What needs were you able to identify and how will you allow the voices who identified or affirmed these needs co-create with you in framing the value proposition?
 - a. What are the hopes, dreams, and possibilities of those you listen to and how do they align with the hopes and dreams to which God is calling you?
6. How are the biblical characteristics of the identified values present in your engagement, without having to explicitly point them out?

In other words, are these characteristics (fruits of the Spirit) perceived (with no strings attached), without the feelings of skepticism? Your efforts should embody humility in every aspect of your interaction, without the appearance of trying to convince, win, cajole, or trick someone into something. The fact that we would consider this kind of strategy magnifies the improper tendency to leverage our consumer posture in a world where our interaction with others has been shaped by advertising and marketing strategies. Do you see the difference? Jesus worked to use communication tools to subvert the tendencies that feed our human desires, not leverage them for gain.

7. How sensitive are you to the formation of this value through the Christian, community, and consumer perspectives (lenses) in every outlet through which you engage the mission field?

Cultural linguistic traditions (Marcus Borg, Speaking Christian, HarperOne, 2011) embrace every aspect of how we communicate and interact in our world — verbal, nonverbal, visual, audible, emotional, social, stylistic, creative, etc. Jesus used every tool in his toolbox in order to communicate and translate his teaching — metaphor, overstatement, questions, proverb, paradox, etc. In ever-shifting culture, we must do the same.

CHAPTER 7

Vision



Vision = What can be. The **vision** represents how you've listened to your mission field to reach your audience and to deliver the value proposition. Deep listening to God and to the people groups within the mission field gives shape to a vision that inspires *what can be*. Having the ability to effectively articulate your **vision** is central to cultivating new relationships and sparking a movement. When someone asks you what you are up to, what do you say? What is your elevator speech?

Vision statements are not visions. They are sentences that offer an abbreviated and concise expression of intentional direction — opportunities that matter. In the corporate world, vision statements are less about making a difference and more about making money, wrapped in the cloak of making a difference. Companies spend significant energy becoming crystal clear about how to connect and communicate with their particular market in ways that manipulate buying decisions and promote brand loyalty. Market research shapes products and the strategies employed to distribute and sell those products.

In order to spark a movement of change in your community, the vision must represent the hopes and dreams of people groups within

the mission field. This means that intercultural competency remains as a foundation to the development of your own cultural self-awareness, how you understand place, and how you appreciated the vast range of perspectives that often exist in our neighborhoods. What are the hopes and dreams of your neighbors? Where do you find intersecting points between the community of faith and the mission field? How big is the collective dream? You want to hold a birthing vision carefully and with open hands.

Being curious about people in your neighborhood will help you discover what God is already up to. You are not building a cookie-cutter model as you create new places with new people. You should actually be discovering what is emerging from action and organizing in your community, in order to help a grassroots movement take shape. Context is so important. Where do you see Jesus already at work in the wider community?

The vision statement — your elevator speech — should clearly articulate the hopes and dreams of your project, inspiring others to join in the movement, while making room for new voices. Here are some considerations as you develop your vision statement:

1. **Clear:** Make sure the primary goal is apparent.
2. **Bold:** Your vision must be compelling and point toward change — “Get into good trouble, necessary trouble” (Rep. John Lewis).



Photo credit: Riccardo Annandale, unsplash.com

3. **Future-oriented:** The vision is “what can be” — the difference to be actuated and celebrated.
4. **Challenging:** Bold visions embrace innovation; they initiate action.
5. **Inspiring:** Why should someone care? A strong vision statement lifts the hopes and dreams of others to action.
6. **Contextual:** The vision must be in response to the challenges and opportunities within a specific context.

Churches have perfected the ability to write vision and mission statements that are not the best representation of their actions. These aspirational statements might feel good, but they rarely reflect what is being lived out in community. A vision statement should provide others an entry point of engagement, while inspiring the difference that can be achieved together. It should embody the ultimate goal — *common good for the neighborhood*. Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. said, “I have a dream!”⁸ What will you and your neighbors dream together?

Below are some examples of vision statements from the corporate world. Notice how they invoke a lifestyle, pushing the narrative away from products and services to a particular way of being in the world. This marketing strategy is how culture is shaped, both within an organization and within a specific market.

Nike — “Bring inspiration and innovation to every athlete* in the world. (*If you have a body, you are an athlete.”)

Patagonia — “Build the best product, cause no unnecessary harm, use business to inspire and implement solutions to the environmental crisis.”

American Heart Association — “To be a relentless force for a world of longer, healthier lives.”

⁸ Martin Luther King, Jr., “I Have a Dream.” Speech, Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C.. August 28, 1963

Apple — “We believe that we are on the face of the earth to make great products and that’s not changing.”

Microsoft — “Microsoft is a technology company whose mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more. We strive to create local opportunity, growth, and impact in every country around the world.”

Habitat for Humanity — “A world where everyone has a decent place to live.”

REI — “REI’s core purpose is to inspire, educate, and outfit for a lifetime of outdoor adventure and stewardship. As a cooperative, everyone in the company and customers, producers, and suppliers, are invited in to the mission of REI and asked to play a part in creating the unique REI experience.”

Goodwill — “Every person has the opportunity to achieve his/her fullest potential and participate in and contribute to all aspects of life.”

Alaska Airlines — “To be one of the most respected U.S. airlines by our customers, employees, and shareholders.”

Google — “To provide access to the world’s information in one click.”

Amazon — “Our vision is to be earth’s most customer-centric company; to build a place where people can come to find and discover anything they might want to buy online.”

NPR — “To produce, acquire, and distribute programming that meets the highest standards of public service in journalism and cultural expression; to represent our members in matters of their mutual interest, and to provide satellite interconnection for the entire public radio system.”

Remember, your vision is your elevator speech. It represents **what can be**. It must be discerned from deep listening to God and to the people and places of your neighborhood — the mission field. It’s how we deliver our value proposition.

Discussion and Planning Questions for Shaping the Vision:

1. Where does difference convene in your context? How can your new project bring difference together?
2. What new things do you want to explore or pioneer?
3. Name the positive risks that need to happen for your project to be successful.
4. How do the answers to these questions help shape **what can be** in your context?

CHAPTER 8

Mission



Mission = What we are called/compelled

to do. The official statement of our tribe,

The United Methodist Church, is as follows:

“The mission of the church is to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.” For years I have struggled with this statement, as the words “making disciples” constitutes justification of a colonizing approach to developing Christian community. It reinforces that we are to “make” others into what we are, rather than together be remade into the image of God, through Christ.

Instead of continuing to use the word “make,” I prefer the term “foster.” Fostering means to create a safe space where “we” can be/ become our best or most complete selves. This more closely aligns with the fullness of life that Jesus offers. It is time we move away from language that reinforces or reflects our colonizing heritage, just as it is time we move away from the cross and flame logo.⁹

⁹ For decades, The United Methodist Church “cross and flame” logo has invoked the image of a burning cross, triggering jarring emotions as from the same racist acts of the Ku Klux Klan in the South. If we are a church that is about anti-racism and the work of reconciliation (while confronting our own institutional racism in a church that is 94% white), we not only have to do better, but also we must remove all racist images and icons that have been used to intimidate black people for hundreds of years in America.



Photo credit: Mark Konig, unsplash.com

Therefore, the mission (what we are called/compelled to do) represents how the new project/community of faith relates to the people groups of the mission field, in the process of fostering disciples. Remember, if liberation is at the core of our social justice action, then the idea that “my life is not abundant or full until your life is abundant and full” must continue to be reflected in our words and our actions. Culture shift begins with language and how we talk about the necessary change (the vision — what can be).

The United States didn’t live into the mission of going to the moon without first naming that hope and dream well before all the problems were solved — years ahead the historic date of July 20,

1969, when astronauts first walked on the moon (mission accomplished). We have lots of work to do, which is why we must strive diligently for our “walk” to align with our “talk.” The actions of the mission must embody the dreams of the vision. It requires continuous collaboration. This work of defining the type of relationship the church desires to establish with the mission field and people groups within must be based on deep listening. There naturally should be a number of entry points apparent for people to join in the movement.

The idea of intentional multiplication cannot be based on scarcity and the desire to make more people “contribute” through a plethora of ways. Instead, intentional multiplication has to be rooted in the important work of intercultural competency and an inclusive culture. Multiplication should not be the goal. It is the byproduct of creating safe and courageous space for fostering disciples — the origins of the Methodist movement. If this kind of culture is tended, we will experience the liberating fullness of life we all desire. This is how we foster disciples who foster disciples, identify leaders who identify and develop leaders, spark ministries that spark ministries, and create new places with new people who create new places with new people. Living organisms multiply — life fosters life.

If you have participated in one of our Multiplying Ministries cohorts you are aware of the leadership identification and growth apprentice model, as presented by Brian Zehr of Intentional Impact (www.intentionalimpact.com). This model is a reminder of how to

identify, listen, give agency to, and mentor potential leaders who rise up in your setting. Remember, it is not our work to turn others into who we are and how we operate. Instead, the ICNU (or “I see in you”) approach offered by Zehr follows Jesus’ way of recognizing the gifts and passions of others around us. By listening, giving agency to, and learning with others, we are able to foster a culture of discipleship and multiplication.

The following is a summary of the ICNU apprentice model that is a part of Multiplying Ministries:

1. I do, you watch, we talk
2. I do, you help, we talk
3. You do, I help, we talk
4. You do, I watch, we talk
5. You do, someone new watches, you all talk

This intentional and practical method allows for co-creation, collaboration, and collective learning that both provides an entry point for leaders and voice in order to shape the space in ever-emerging culture. It cannot be a check list. It must represent a developmental process that moves everyone toward a common and inclusive goal, as a direct part of fostering disciples.

Discussion Questions for the Mission:

1. How do you describe social justice?
2. Is social justice and social holiness the same? If so how? If not, why?
3. What is your plan for learning and growing community across cultural difference?
4. What power and privilege do you represent in this context?
5. What issues disproportionally impact vulnerable communities and what movements will you engage?
6. What is your plan for fostering disciples?

Clarity in the mission and how you will accomplish it allows for important boundaries within your organization — how you share responsibility, delegate tasks, and exercise judgement. It's like the headlamp, pointing the way and navigating you toward measurable results. Mission clarity provides transparency that is important for your stakeholders.

CHAPTER 9

Vital Actions



Vital actions represent the most important things you must do to make the business/ministry model work. Every new project/community of faith has a number of to-dos that push the movement forward in order to find success/fruitfulness. But with vital actions, I'm not talking about your long to-do list. Instead, this section represents the most important actions that must happen in order to accomplish your mission.

These actions are both a result of considering the value proposition of 'life in all fullness,' while also giving shape to how the vision is perceived and received by people groups. Vital actions generate costs on various levels — financial, human, time, etc. — contributing to a better understanding of energy spent in any given season of your project. Different business models require different actions and energy.

For instance, if you were starting a bakery, vital actions might be baking, delivery, advertising/marketing, and building and optimizing your business platform. These actions are the most important to establishing your bakery and providing a process through which to evaluate and pivot strategy. While there is a myriad of to-dos in a new



Photo credit: Álvaro Serrano, unsplash.com.

bakery, the vital actions are the most important activities that push the startup process closer to a sustainable model. The same will be true for your new project. Your vital actions should reflect the operations side as it relates to the delivery side — the mission field, vision, and mission. There shouldn't be more than three or four vital actions for your project.

There are differences in models that account for basic differences in vital actions. For instance, a bakery produces items to sell — cakes, cookies, breads, etc. Selling these products accounts for the primary revenue stream. So, all vital actions are the necessary ones that help achieve this transaction (baking, delivery, advertising, and building and optimizing the business platform).

In starting a new project you must focus primarily on four areas: **people, communication plan, financial sustainability, and evaluation and adjustments.** It should go without saying that the automatic assumption of starting a new project is the focus of building Christian community that reflects your context. And, it is assumed that discipleship is at the core of this effort. Therefore, your vital actions, for the purpose of the operational side of the business/ministry model is that of people, a communication plan, financial sustainability, and evaluation and adjustment.

People:

As we have already discussed on the delivery side of the canvas/process, the mission field, vision, and mission all relate to how we engage, communicate, and co-create with specific people groups/audience. Here are a few things to consider under the people category:

1. **Cultural Self-awareness** — The work of intercultural competency is ongoing. Gaining awareness of your own cultural values, norms, communication style, and worldview allows you to appreciate the cultural formation and experiences of others. Cultural differences allow for more effective teams, which makes a way for more voices to shape the collective effort. *How will the work of intercultural competency continue to shape the manner in which you see and engage others?*

2. **Meeting new people** — Initiating or joining in a movement in your context centers on meeting new people and networking relationships. *What is your plan for meeting new people each week?*
3. **Deep Listening** — Hearing the stories and experiences of others in your neighborhood/wider community allows you to test and suspend assumptions and learn from others. *How will you hear the needed voices that contribute to a compelling vision?*
4. **Building Relationships** — It's one thing to meet someone new and hear their story. It is quite another to build authentic relationships with others who share in an unfolding vision and grassroots movement. *What is your plan for co-creating with others?*
5. **Fostering Disciples** — Again, it is assumed that a plan for fostering disciples is central to the mission; however, I want to list it here as a reminder that it is connected to the relationships you establish with others. *What is your plan for fostering disciples?*

Communication Plan:

Naming a basic communication strategy is essential to your startup efforts. In a day and time when new information is accessed almost immediately, it is essential to continue to build a communication strategy. Here are a few things to consider to get you started:

1. **Elevator Speech** — Your vision in short form, the elevator speech should permeate how you talk about the work you see emerging in your neighborhood/wider community. What are the creative ways you will utilize your elevator speech to build awareness and cast vision?
2. **Talking Points** — While your elevator speech is your personal response of passion, talking points provide a coalescing way for others to join in messaging. Make sure you develop clear talking points that can be utilized by your team and partners.
3. **Personal Platform** — You represent your own platform of influence, whether you realize it or not. Make sure those people know what you are up to!
4. **Website** — A no-brainer. This should be the landing spot for people, which can be utilized as a sharable platform and include all mediums (quality video, audio, photography, graphics, branding, etc.).
5. **Social Media** — This one should go without noting. Make sure you are plugged into the social media platforms your particular audience/people groups utilize.
6. **Other Outlets** — Don't miss any opportunity to share the collective vision with others. News, blogs, podcasts, speaking opportunities, conferences, collateral materials, swag, etc. Know how your mission field gathers and shares information.

Financial Sustainability:

Financial sustainability stands alone as one of the single most apparent benchmarks for success. This is true for any business, organization, or movement. In the work of starting a new project, you must have a robust plan for financial sustainability.¹⁰ Areas for consideration include:

1. **Startup Funds** — These are funds available from institutional or individual sources, including District, Conference, General Church, and even large individual donors.
2. **Personal Network** — Make sure you lean into your personal network. These are people who will invest in you because of their relationship with and belief in you. Give them an opportunity to make that investment.
3. **Granting Agencies** — As a religious institution, there are a number of granting sources to which you can apply. However, if you establish a separate non-profit business that is tethered to the community of faith, and classified separately (e.g., charitable organization), a number of additional granting agencies can be approached.

¹⁰ Note: As you focus on financial sustainability, there must also be systems of financial accountability put into place. Remember, you and your team are accountable to your granting agencies and institutional partners.

4. **Giving** — While congregational giving will never be the lifeblood of a new church, do not miss an opportunity for people both inside and outside of your movement to give. Make it easy for them to do so. There are various apps and online platforms that you can utilize.
5. **Social Enterprise** — At the core of your new project must be alternative revenue streams that lean into theological entrepreneurship. This is a nonprofit (or for profit) business model inside/tethered to the community of faith, fitting for your context (e.g., co-working space, coffeehouse, bar, wine tasting, consignment store, theater, art center, etc.).
6. **Endowments** — Endowments are often overlooked in the efforts to cultivate financial sustainability. An endowment is beneficial to the giver and the receiver, as income or a form of property can be given to an individual or organization.

Evaluation and Adjustments:

Knowing when you are succeeding (and when you are not) is extremely important. And while that might sound like an obvious statement, many pastors don't know how to measure success in a new project. Sometimes the fear of naming metrics is hidden behind a posture of plausible deniability and the perceived ambiguity of institutional measurements. But innovation breaks us out of these postures and cycles. Church is not the same in post-Christian

contexts, and church will never be the same post-pandemic (COVID-19). Now is the time to evaluate our existing metrics (perceived or otherwise) and shift to new.

The Innovation Vitality Team is working to establish new metrics around community engagement through five missional shifts that can give evidence of movement in a new or vitality project. They articulate a practical way of loving your neighbor, while helping redefine what it looks like to be church. These shifts include:

Fragmented Isolation >>>> To **Neighborhood Presence**
Religious Consumerism >>>> To **Collaborative Participation**
Unrecognized Privilege >>>> To **Equitable Inclusion**
Scarcity Lens >>>> To **Abundant Ecology**
Toxic Charity >>>> To **Community Caring**

These shifts move the church from ministry “for” and “to” toward ministry “with” those in their neighborhood. For far too long, the church has engaged their wider communities without checking their assumptions or listening to the stories of their neighbors.

A solid feedback loop is essential to maintaining a culture of innovation. Evaluation must happen internally and externally. Here are some things to consider when you are developing a feedback loop for evaluation and adjustments:

1. **Establish a Culture of Listening** — A culture of listening welcomes feedback, approaching it with a posture of curiosity and holding it with open hands.
2. **Seek Feedback** — Hold regular meetings with your team and provide intentional opportunities for outside voices to give feedback.
3. **Gather Information** — Make sure that you are collecting information from across the spectrum of your plan.
4. **Analyze** — Process the feedback against the vision, mission, and value proposition. Make sure there is alignment.
5. **Make Changes** — Make the appropriate changes, based on evaluated feedback.
6. **Communicate** — Once changes have been made, make sure to share the new, which reinforces a culture of listening.

Here it may be helpful to recall Eric Ries' build-measure-learn (in chapter 2) from *The Lean Startup*. which frames the feedback loop for a process of optimization.

Discussion Questions for Vital Actions:

1. What will be your vital actions under the category of people?

2. What will be your vital actions under the category of communication plan?
3. What will be your vital actions under the category of financial sustainability?
4. What will be your vital actions under the category of evaluation and adjustments?
5. How will you create necessary feedback loops?

CHAPTER 10

Vital Resources



Vital resources are the most important assets required to make the business/ministry model work. Obviously, in building Christian community and a safe space for everyone, spiritual assets are a given. However, many resources that are right in front of us are often overlooked.

As you and your team collaborate with your neighbors, the collective combination of assets is critical. This intersects the work of Asset Based Community Development and begins with categorizing your resources. Think through and list your **vital resources**, based on the following five categories:

1. **Spiritual Resources** — In our tribe we can frame these as works of piety (individual and corporate) and works of mercy (individual and corporate). How your community of faith participates in personal piety and social holiness will be driven by your context and your neighbors. John Wesley saw these as a means of grace.
2. **Physical Resources** — These resources are made up of land, buildings, property, and equipment — tangible items — that can be utilized to accomplish the mission.

3. **Intellectual Resources** — These resources are intangible resources such as contact lists, know-how/expertise, brands, copyrights, established partnerships, revenue streams, etc.
4. **Human Resources** — These resources represents the pastors, leaders, team members, employees, volunteers, teachers, coordinators, managers, organizations, etc.
5. **Financial Resources** — These resources are the most apparent and include cash, stocks, and lines of credit.

Identifying your resources, particularly by exploring each of these five categories, will reveal assets you may have not considered important to your planning process. There is no way to leverage an asset that you don't recognize as having some contributing value.

In our American context, almost since the first church was established, the idea that we are to provide services "to" and "for" others has driven a programatic approach in ministry. However, today, in a growing individualistic, post-Christian America where consumer culture flourishes, it is more and more important to focus on deepening relationships beyond the transactional. This means we must shift ministry from "to" and "for" toward "with" and "by," where co-creating and collaboration are central.

The work of Faith-Based Community Organizing, which we touched on in Chapter 6, gives way to the kind of listening that needs to happen in our neighborhoods and forces us to test our assumptions



Photo credit: My Life Through a Lens, unsplash.com.

and identify need. Rather than meeting that need through a transactional approach, what if we were able to join with our neighbors to build lasting change and improve the circumstances of people's lives? This is where Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) provides new opportunities for the church to live out the idea of beloved community.

This approach to community development was birthed by John McKnight and John Kretzmann while they were at Northwestern University. At the foundation of McKnight and Kretzmann's ABCD approach rests three important facts: **1) everyone has gifts; 2) everyone has something to contribute;** and **3) everyone cares about something and that passion is his or her motivation to act.** Rather than seeing or treating others as consumers, an ABCD

approach moves people from a passive posture to an active co-creator. Therefore, the ABCD approach begins from and looks for the gifts and strengths (assets) people have to contribute.

In order to shift from our fear and scarcity mindset, which in ABCD terms is deficit-based and where needs are identified, ABCD identifies, pulls together, and builds upon strengths. The idea that “we are better together” recognizes that a position of abundance (contributed resources) opens new possibilities. Considering the five shifts pointed out in Chapter 9, this moves us from a scarcity lens to abundant ecology.

The Tamarack Institute offers eight helpful touchstones in the work of Asset-Based Community Development. You can start by asking these three questions: 1) **What can we do?** 2) **What do we need outside help with?** 3) **What do we need outside agencies to do for us?**

The Tamarack Institute’s **eight touchstones**¹¹ to ABCD work are as follows:

1. **Establish a Community-building Team** — What people are good at discovering what people care about and where their assets can be used?

¹¹ Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, “Asset-Based Community Development at a glance” — For more details on these touchstones, and an overview of ABCD offered by the Tamarack Institute, check out the following link: <https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/guide-asset-based-community-development-at-a-glance>

2. **Recruit a Community Organizer** — This is not someone who will set an agenda, but someone who is skilled and passionate about helping people organize.
3. **Host Community Conversations** — Create opportunities for diverse conversations to take place, focused not on “deliverables” but on mutual discovery.
4. **Engage Community Groups and Organizations** — Clubs, associations, and informal groups offer great capacity towards community building.
5. **Build Connections and Social Interaction** — Connectors and organizers are to create meaningful interactions, not just plan events.
6. **Inspire Vision and Plan for the Future** — Once trusting relationships have begun to form, look to the future to imagine together what the community could look like (for example, ten years from now).
7. **Implement Change** — Take action and next steps to work towards your shared vision for the future.
8. **Foster Celebration** — Throughout the process, take joy in every positive development, in each person’s gifts, and the effort they invest. Believe-in and encourage each other.

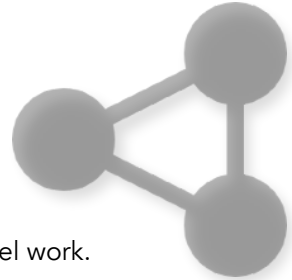
Discussion Questions and Considerations for Vital Resources:

1. Utilize the five categories (spiritual, physical, intellectual, human, and financial) in order to think through and list your assets.
2. Considering these vital resources, how will they inform your curiosity when you are conducting one-to-one meetings and/or conducting deep listening in your context?
3. What will be your plan for an Asset-Based Community Development approach in your context?
4. How will more BIPOC and other leaders from the margins lead community development processes?

One of the best examples of ABCD connected to The United Methodist Church is the community development work initiated by Rev. John Edgar of the United Methodist Church for All People in Columbus, Ohio. In their focus on a Divine economy of Abundance, the vision for the Church for All People begins with a whole, healthy, and engaged community. See 4allpeople.org for more information.

CHAPTER 11

Vital Partners



Vital partners represent the network of partners that make the business/ministry model work. These relationships are essential to its development and effectiveness. They are especially important when building capacity; optimizing your business/ministry model; understanding economy of scale; encouraging risk-taking innovation, while limiting exposure to financial risk; and supplementing action and activities.

Partnerships are formed for many reasons. They can be for efficiency, risk reduction, to leverage aligned strategies, or even to acquire valuable resources. Partnerships can advance your cause by leaning into expertise that may not yet exist on your team or within your project scope. You can accomplish more with vital partners, while also helping you navigate uncharted waters.

Coming out of our last chapters on Vital Actions and Vital Resources, and the overview of asset-based community development, there are essentially four questions when considering your partnerships.

1. Who are your vital partners?
2. Do you have any key suppliers that provide goods or services connected to your project?

3. Which vital actions are completed by partners?
4. Which identified vital resources are actually provided by partners?

Vital partners come in all forms in the work of creating new places with new people. While some may be connected to the church as an institution, others are born from relationships established in your neighborhood/community — your mission field. In this way, you may think of partnership as inside partners (directly related to the church as an institution) and outside partners (those autonomous organizations that are part of the heartbeat of your wider community/neighborhood).

When we review our areas of consideration for vital actions, there are four compartments to think through: **People**, **Communication Plan**, **Financial Sustainability**, and **Evaluation and Adjustments**. Each of these categories provides us ways of identifying existing partners or those vital partnerships that are needed. As this relates to your **Vital Actions** work, some examples to process include:

People:

1. Is there a vital partner who will help you and your leaders/ participants, become more culturally self-aware?
2. Is there a vital partner who specializes in community organizing?
3. Is there a vital partner in the work of fostering disciples?

Communication Plan:

1. If they exist, describe the vital partner contributions to your communication plan?
2. Who is handling your website?
3. Describe the vital partner(s) in the area of news outlets, blogs, conferences, etc.

Financial Sustainability:

1. Who is providing your startup funding?
2. What granting agencies might be aligned with your vision/mission?
3. Who are your vital partners (startup, operations, suppliers, volunteers/employees, etc.) helping operate your social enterprise?

Evaluation and Adjustments:

1. Is there a vital partner who helps define metrics?
2. Who helps monitor success and how is it defined?



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These questions, and others you will uncover, will help you identify existing and needed partners, as they relate to operations.

When you do the same examination, based on your vital resources, you will also add to the list of existing and/or needed collaborators. These are classified in the compartments of **Spiritual, Physical, Intellectual, Human, and Financial** resources. Some examples connected to your vital resources and ABCD work include the following:

Spiritual Resources:

1. Who are the vital partners that help define your theology?

2. Is there a vital partner in shaping how disciples are fostered?

Physical Resources:

1. Is there a vital partner with land or a building which may be available for use?
2. Is there a vital partner who can provide you with equipment (computers, office/area furniture, etc.)?

Intellectual Resources:

1. Is there a vital partner who can help with demographic research?
2. Is there a vital partner who can provide access to people lists?
3. Is there a vital partner with know-how that aligns with your vision/mission?
4. Is there a vital partner who provides an alternative revenue stream?

Human Resources:

1. Who are the other leaders that align with your vision/mission?
2. Who are your team members?
3. Who can volunteer time and energy?

4. What outside organizations can help you accomplish your goals?

Financial Resources:

1. Who is providing access to funding?
2. What other organizations could provide access to funding?

These questions, among others, can offer a new perspective on your vital partners or those needed in support of your project.

The most obvious for those in the Greater Northwest Area include the Cabinet/District Superintendent, the IV Team, Conference staff, Coaches, Boards/Committees, all making up **vital partners** within the institution. But, for your project to be successful, outside partners must be identified and invited into the work of community development in all areas. Strategic alliances, joint ventures, and intentional collaboration can make for a robust team of vital partners.

Discussion Questions and Considerations for Vital Partners:

1. Considering the vital actions and vital resources listed, how will you identify existing or potential vital partners?
2. Do all these identified or potential partners align with your vision and mission?

3. How many BIPOC partners or partners from the margins have you identified?
4. How will you evaluate what cultural perspectives are under or over represented to inform your identification process?

CHAPTER 12

Cost Structures



The **cost structures** represent all costs incurred to operate the business/ministry model. This building block helps you see the most important costs that are incurred while engaging the wider community through the strategies of your new project. These expenses can be calculated easily, once your vital resources, vital actions, and vital partners have all been defined.

Your business/ministry model can be more cost-driven (a focus on keeping costs down), depending on which strategies are employed and when. This is where lean startup strategies, which leverage existing relationships, share resources, and create space for the multiplication of leaders, are essential. This allows for initial growth and scalability.

The cost structure that shapes your budgeting process is closely related to the value proposition. In our work, where the bedrock of our offering is “fullness of life,” costs can be ambiguous. This is because interpreting the value proposition will be contextual. It’s why drilling down to the practical is so important to having valid numbers. You must be meticulous so that you don’t under represent actual

costs. Don't fear the bottomline. How do you know what you need if you don't know the costs?

For example, let's say you are making widgets. And, you have a target sale price that's based on market research and focus group interaction with your product (what you learn people will pay). In order to meet a sale price that would appropriately represent the value proposition for a particular target audience, you have to know your costs. Keeping cost down means a close look at manufacturing contracts, supply chains, marketing, and point-of-sale promotions. This helps you see whether you can feasibly make the widget and a profit. There has to be enough margin to cover all your costs, and show a profit. Cost structures become the basis for establishing the necessary revenue streams that allow for sustainability and scalability. Costs inform price/profit. Make sense?

Through a theological entrepreneurship approach, the work you have to do involves much translation. Don't get so bogged down in the business demands that you lose focus on the vision/mission.

Remember, you have to see this through a theological lens. This is an added level of discernment that delineates between a for-profit and a non-profit effort designed to subvert consumer culture rather than capitalize on it.

Now that you have done some initial work on your vital actions, vital resources, and vital partners, you can begin to more closely understand your costs. Like building a house, keeping cost down —



Photo credit: Tierra Mallorca, unsplash.com

without completely sacrificing quality and efficiency — is important to value assessment and financing for the builder or potential home owner. Businesses define cost structures in four categories. Each of these categories helps you frame and think about your operating costs. They are as follows:

1. **Cost-driven** — Remember, cost-driven structures are designed to keep expenses down. Companies can enjoy cost savings through streamlined operations. There are two ways this is represented: Economies of scale and Economies of scope. Economies of scale represent the cost savings as a business grows. As the business grows it can benefit from

volume discounts, which result in lower product costs. Economies of scope represent cost savings that a company experiences as the business expands its market share. Market leaders can leverage their operation to expand product lines. A cost-driven approach can also be achieved in your new project, by embracing lean startup strategies, keeping cost low in the beginning.

2. **Value-driven** — Value-driven cost structures rest on providing more value through premium products or services. Apple is a great example of value-driven cost structures, as they leverage their products to gain consumers who value quality, performance, and the brand more than price. This strategy builds customers and brand loyalty through perceived value. You can think about value-driven cost structures as they relate to excellence in what is offered through your new project. This directly relates to how the value proposition is offered to the mission field, in all forms.
3. **Fixed costs** — Fixed costs are those cost that do not change with the volume of products or services sold. Examples include salaries, taxes, interest, insurance, lease payments, utilities, etc. These costs do not typically change over the span of an agreement. For the purpose of launching a new project or new social enterprise, calculate your known fixed cost connected to your first year for a business plan, and three to five years out, for your strategic plan.

4. **Variable costs** — In the business world, variable cost change based on proportion to production output. If there is a decrease or an increase in production, the costs of that production can decrease or increase. Examples of variable costs are things such as commissions, shipping, labor rate per item produced, and supplies. If we use our bakery example from earlier, the more loaves of bread you bake, plus the cost of labor (the person baking), variable costs of baking the bread increases. There will be certain costs that can be controlled more easily than fixed costs, in order to maintain financial sustainability. This will primarily relate to the social enterprise.

I cannot emphasize enough the importance of understanding your cost structures. The majority of businesses fail in the first three years of existence, primarily because of a lack of understanding of their costs and what it actually takes to deliver their value proposition. Figuring out your **vital actions**, **vital resources**, and **vital partners** makes forecasting costs and revenue for operations more accurate.

Discussion Questions and Considerations for Cost Structures:

1. Considering your emerging business/ministry model, list out your anticipated costs based on the preceding four categories.
2. Is your business/ministry model more cost-driven or value-driven?

3. Where are the areas you can keep costs low in the early phases of development?
4. What things might you get free or receive in-kind in order to keep costs down?
5. How might you think and see cost structures through a theological lens? (We might use the term stewardship.)

CHAPTER 13

Revenue Streams



The **revenue streams** represent the funds generated in the process of reaching and co-creating with the mission field/audience.

Obviously, your revenue streams must be higher than your cost structures to maintain financial sustainability and scalability.

Customers are essential for the success of businesses, whether the businesses are offering products or services. For the work of launching a new project or social enterprise, relationships with people and organizations are the necessary drivers.

As you consider the value proposition, and how it is offered and communicated to the audience/mission field, there are a few leading questions to address. Additionally, your cost structures dictate your revenue streams. As these are identified, think through the following questions:

1. How does value translate in the activity of giving or making a transaction (through a social enterprise) with your audience?
2. How do they prefer to pay/give?
3. What percentage does each revenue stream add to the bottomline?

4. How might your cost structures be adjusted accordingly?

Revenue streams can be transactional, one-time gifts, or recurring payments as a part of a larger giving campaign. In order to support the kinds of strategies required for your new project or social enterprise, you will need to develop multiple revenue streams. Considering what I have already presented in chapter 9, which focused on vital actions, let's expand the list of examples under the necessary actions related to financial sustainability.

1. **Startup Funds** — While these funds represent an advance on future vitality, you still need to list out all possible sources.
 - District
 - Conference
 - General church
 - Individual donors
 - Venture capitalists for nonprofit work
2. **Personal Network** — Again, these are people who believe in you and will invest in you and the difference you desire to make in the world. Some of these sources will continue to give well beyond the startup phase.
 - Family
 - Friends
 - Associates
 - Other networked relationships

3. **Granting Agencies** — What are the granting agencies to which you can apply that award funds to religious institutions? Additionally, as you establish a separate but tethered nonprofit organization to your project, you can expand your grant applications.
 - Religious granting agencies
 - Agencies focused on charitable giving
 - Other sources
4. **Giving** — Traditionally, congregational giving was the primary revenue stream for churches. This is not the case today for new churches. That being said, you need to develop multiple opportunities for people to give.
 - Online giving
 - Giving by text
 - Onsite transactions (Square, Intuit Go Payment, etc.)
 - Annual giving campaign/commitment
5. **Social Enterprise** — Social enterprises can take on a number of forms, which have already been previously listed. But the number of transaction opportunities needs to be identified for your specific model.
 - Products
 - Services
 - Rental/lease payments



Photo credit: Pepi Stojanovski, unsplash.com

- Usage fees
 - Subscription fees
 - Advertising opportunities for non-competing entities
6. **Endowments** — These often overlooked sources of revenue, which align with the vision/mission, should be pursued. This includes opportunities to either set up an endowment for investment income or access the funds of an existing endowment operating as a granting agency.
- Large donors
 - Established endowments
 - Educational institutions

- Service-oriented organizations

Making an exhaustive list of all the possible revenue streams is important to building a realistic and accurate budget. The importance of flexibility cannot be stated enough, as ongoing adjustments will be the norm. Remember, cash flow is the lifeblood of any successful business. Without understanding how money flows in and out, you are sunk.

Discussion Questions and Considerations for Revenue Streams:

1. What agencies or institutions can you approach for startup funds?
2. Build an exhaustive list of people based on your personal network.
3. Who are the granting agencies you could approach with a request?
4. How will you build robust giving opportunities in support of your new project?
 - a. What are the different modes of payment you will employ that matches your particular group's preferences?
5. What kind of social enterprise makes sense in your context?
 - a. What benefits will help customers make buying decisions?

6. What will be your plan for setting up or accessing endowments?
7. How does your cash flow pencil out? Or, does your cash flow meet your model?

SECTION 3:

Pulling it All Together

This final section offers an overview of how to put together your strategic plan, highlights the importance of feedback loops, and showcases additional resources to help in your planning process.

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CHAPTER 14

Constructing Your Strategic Plan

Now that you have worked through all the building blocks of the New Place Startup Process, you should have the necessary information critical to developing a robust and flexible plan. Incorporating the concept of “chaordic tension” (discussed in chapter 2) is important and will help cultivate the successful union of innovation and the institution. Again, most new business opportunities don’t fail because of a lack of funding or staffing. They fail because of poor or missing research, strategy, or planning.

While the planning process can be intimidating and take a significant investment of time, the benefits are huge. And, to embody risk-taking practices, while limiting financial disaster, demands that you plan and prepare. Remaining in the tension, between innovation and the demand for order, forces you to new ways of embracing risk. As you push for calculated decisions, you must hold space for adaptability in your plan. In ever-shifting culture, where the unexpected will rear its ugly head (such as a pandemic), your plan must not only allow for pivots, but also anticipate them.

Depending on the stage of your new project or social enterprise, the process of developing a plan should push you in two directions. The



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two types of plans to consider are the **business plan** and the **strategic plan**. A business plan is a type of strategic plan but its primary purpose is to introduce a business idea, and the key players, to garner funding, and to explain operations in detail. In the work of starting a new project or social enterprise, a business plan outlines the early stages of your business/ministry model, with specific emphasis on the foundation of your first year. The business plan also showcases the expertise of the founders, as investor confidence in leadership is just as important (if not more) than the innovative idea you are trying to get off the ground. Finally, having done your appropriate homework, you should be able to create realistic financial projections.

Separately, the strategic plan picks up where the business plan leaves off, covering a period of three to five years. The purpose of a strategic plan is to implement and oversee the strategy of a business or organization that is starting to grow and get traction. This plan brings focus and action to move the organization closer to defined goals. Prioritizing vital resources and vital actions, and expanding vital partnerships move the organization toward revenue growth and measured success (or ROI), with sustainability and scalability as the priority. Think of a strategic plan as the playbook for the organization, which keeps the team on the same page and moves everyone in a specific direction. And, as a part of the necessary evaluation and adjustment process, the strategic plan can be modified as needed.

In thinking through the arc of a strategic plan, Professor John M. Bryson,¹² who serves as the McNight Presidential Professor of Planning and Public Affairs at Hubert H. Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota, begins with the following questions:

1. What is the situation you are addressing?
2. What do you want to do?
3. How are you going to do it?

¹² John M. Bryson authored *Strategic Planning for Public and Nonprofit Organizations*, which is accessible online here: https://books.google.com/books/about/Strategic_Planning_for_Public_and_Nonpro.html?id=2JJFDwAAQBAJ.

4. What would be the result if you accomplished what you want to do?

These framing questions can help you shape a coherent narrative that links purpose and passion. It's important to help your team and other close stakeholders to clearly understand where the organization is headed. This is how a plan shifts people into the practical steps/actions that push the organization toward its goals. Think of these questions as touchstones as you work through the arc of your planning process.

The Sections of Your Plan

There are a number of sections in a traditional strategic plan. For the purpose of practical implementation, I have customized the following headings for a new project or social enterprise. This is one way to categorize the content and data you have pulled together through the New Place Startup Process. The headings are as follows:

- Executive summary
- Vision statement
- Mission statement
- Mission field analysis
- Strategic goals related to our change theory
 - Inclusion
 - Innovation
 - Multiplication

- Marketing/advertising/communication plan
- Community impact and development
- Metrics and evaluation
- Financial projections/budget

Constructing Your Strategic Plan

You've done the hard work of research, leadership identification, collaboration, and deep listening. You should now have all the necessary information and initial answers in order to begin constructing your strategic plan (you addressed all these questions through the New Place Startup Process). To help organize this information, you can utilize the outline below.

1. **Executive Summary** — A good executive summary is clear and concise and does not contain everything you will layout in your entire plan. It's a one or two page compelling snapshot of your new project/social enterprise that is used to capture interest and convey passion to the reader.
 - What is the identified problem or need?
 - Who is your audience?
 - What is your elevator speech?
 - What is your launch budget?
 - What is your revenue forecast?
 - What is your funding sources or funding needs?

- Who is on your team and what are their qualifications?
2. **Vision Statement** — Your vision statement, or *what can be*, is a concise version of your elevator speech.
 - What is the vision statement you co-created with people from your mission field?
 - How would you articulate fullness of life for the neighborhood?
 - What is compelling and inspiring?
 3. **Mission Statement** — Your mission statement, or *what we are called/compelled to do*, is a contextualized version of the mission. In this case, it's a representation of the UMC mission statement, which helps articulate what it looks like to foster disciples and create community in your context.
 - How would you translate the UMC mission statement for your context?
 - How is justice being addressed?
 4. **Mission Field Analysis** — Describe the makeup of the audience/mission field and all that you have learned about the wider community.
 - What are the demographics?
 - What have you learned from BIPOC neighbors or other closer to the margins that inform your strategies?

- Describe your most significant one-to-one listening interviews.
- What is the identified problem(s) or need(s) or opportunities?
- How would you assess the risk tolerance of your audience?
- What outside organizations/groups have you connected with that align with the vision/mission?
- What theological positions are apparent in the mission field?

5. **Strategic Goals Related to Our Change Theory** — Through the change theory practices of **inclusion**, **innovation**, and **multiplication**, there should be a number of goals set. The following questions (that come from your work with the process) can help you define strategic your goals for each practice of the change theory.

1. Inclusion

- What is your plan to become more interculturally competent (self, team and organization)?
- What is your plan for meeting new people and listening to place?
- Where does difference convene in your context?
- How will you decenter white or other privileged voices?

- What issues disproportionately impact vulnerable communities and what movements will you engage?
- How will you cultivate cultural humility and resilience for the work of justice?
- How will you know you are succeeding?

2. Innovation

- What new things do you want to explore or pioneer?
- Name the positive risks that need to happen for your project to be successful.
- How can your new project bring difference together?
- What is your plan for co-creating with others?
- How will your understanding of community and culture help shift your organization from “for” and “to” toward “with” and “by” those in your neighborhood?
- What do your feedback loops look like and how will they inform pivots?

3. Multiplication

- What social justice initiatives align with your new project or social enterprise?
- What is your plan for identifying and developing leaders?
- What is your plan for fostering disciples?
- Who are your vital partners?

- What vital resources are you able to leverage?
- What social enterprise or alternative revenues streams have you identified or developed?
- Describe your financial sustainability plan.

6. **Marketing/Advertising/Communication Plan** — Depending on your business/ministry model, you will need to think through your marketing, advertising, and communication strategies. Today, information is available instantly and you have to show how your new project or social enterprise is plugged into those channels of communication.

- How is the value proposition communicated through the aesthetics of images, words, brands, and spaces?
- Consumers are conditioned to look for quality and the best value. How will this inform or subvert the interpretation of the value proposition?
- How will your understanding of a consumer perspective help you subvert skepticism and embrace integrity?
- What are your strategic talking points?
- Who is managing and updating your website?
- Explain your social media strategies.
- Describe the vital partner contributions to your communication plan (news outlets, blogs, conferences, etc.).

7. **Community Impact and Development** — This represents the proposed change or solution to the identified problem(s), need(s), or opportunities in your community. Your vital resources play a significant role in this work. Utilizing ABCD strategies helps move your organization from a passive posture to an active co-creator. This approach moves people from a scarcity mindset to the notion that “we are better together,” leveraging gifts and strengths.

- How is the wider community represented in your initiatives?
- How are BIPOC or other voices from the margins leading community development initiatives?
- What vital assets have you identified (spiritual, physical, intellectual, human, and financial)?
- Who are your vital partners, and how are you collaborating/co-creating with them? What are they providing that you cannot?
- What is your overall ABCD approach?

8. **Metrics and Evaluation** — Metrics and evaluation help guide our strategies — they show if success is being achieved or goals reached. This demands an organizational culture of innovation, where flexibility allows for adjustments and pivots.

- What are the metrics you will utilize to gauge success?
- How will your metrics align with the IV Team change theory?

- Describe your process for evaluation and adjustments (feedback loop).
 - Indicate to whom you are accountable.
9. **Financial Projections/Budget** — Having worked with both the delivery (mission field, vision, mission) and operational (vital actions, vital resources, vital partners) sides of your business/ministry model, you should have the necessary numbers to represent your cost structures and revenue streams.
- What are the numbers that represent your cost structures?
 - What are the numbers that make up your revenue streams?
 - Create your financial projections/budget, showing how you will manage the cashflow of your new project or social enterprise over a one-year period (for a business plan) or a three- to five-year period (for your strategic plan).
 - What are your projected income and expenses over the designated timeline(s)?

Tips for Writing Your Plan

After spending the necessary time on research, as framed through the New Place Startup Process, the last thing you want to do is produce a plan that you don't actually use to guide the organization's strategies or operations. Put in the time so that your plan is a robust, flexible roadmap that gives you and your organization the best possible shot

at achieving the identified goals. Here are a few tips in writing your plan:

1. **Appropriate Voices** — Involve the appropriate voices from your team and in your context to support the writing and constructing process.
2. **Be Clear** — In your writing, be clear and concise. Long explanations can cause those following the roadmap to get confused or misunderstand the processes altogether.
3. **Put in the Time** — The planning process takes time. Do not take shortcuts. Put in the necessary effort and leave no stone unturned.
4. **Don't Ignore it** — Do not ignore what your business/strategic plan tells you. Why would you take the time to invest in the planning process only to put in on the shelf and ignore what it is telling you?

Discussion and Questions for Constructing Your Strategic Plan:

1. No more questions. It's time to pull everything together from the New Place Startup Process into a clear, concise, flexible plan. Get started, now!

CHAPTER 15

The Necessity of a Feedback Loop

In chapter 9, we briefly discussed the importance of a solid feedback loop in maintaining a culture of innovation. Innovation is about taking advantage of shifts and reimagining new ways forward. Remember, the evaluation process must be both internal and external. The list for consideration that I previously shared can help define your process of evaluation and adjustment.

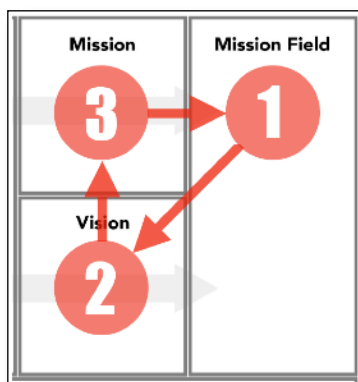
1. Establish a culture of listening
2. Seek feedback
3. Gather information
4. Analyze
5. Make changes
6. Communicate

These steps can overlay multiple evaluative processes in your new project or social enterprise, creating necessary process of optimization.

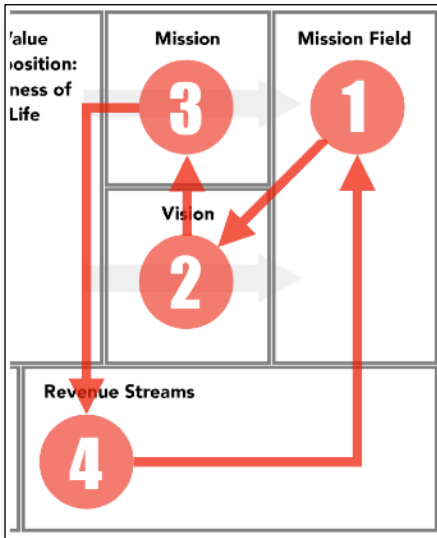
Beyond the basic pattern shown on the New Place Startup Canvas (see Figure 1.4 on page 31), there are other ways to engage the canvas/process related to feedback loops. We can highlight these by looking at the **delivery** side (**mission field**, **vision**, and **mission**) and the **operational** side (**vital actions**, **vital resources**, and **vital partners**) of the process. This allows for four additional process loops within the business/ministry model that can assist in evaluating and adjusting specific areas of your strategic plan.

Delivery Side Feedback Loops

On the **delivery** side of the process (the right side of the New Place Startup Canvas), it is important to open up communication channels for deep listening and feedback. When you engage the three primary blocks of the delivery side of the process model (**mission field**, **vision**, and **mission**), you are able to continuously



track how the value proposition is permeating community engagement. This smaller loop within the larger process enables continuous deep listening in the neighborhood/community (**mission field**) and needed refinement of the **vision**, and helps adjust/align the **mission**. A word of caution: if you represent power and privilege, you may have to work a bit harder to gain feedback, particularly from



non-dominant cultures. Consider your position as a leader or leadership team in creating your feedback loops.

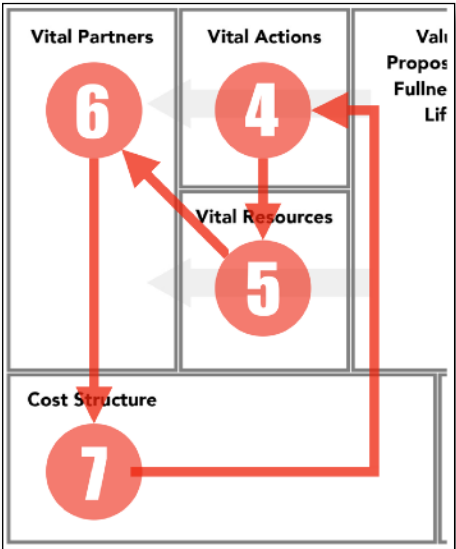
If you expand this loop out to also include revenue streams, ongoing evaluation of alternative revenue streams and expansion remain directly connected to what is happening in or emerging from the wider community.

Revenue is generated through direct and indirect connection and collaboration with the mission field. If you are not intentional about monitoring this interaction, you will miss necessary adjustments or new opportunities. How is your particular audience continuing to speak into the vision, participating and aligning with the mission, and what new opportunities might this interaction bring in the form of new revenue?

Operational Side Feedback Loops

Likewise, the operational side of the process (left side of the New Place Startup Canvas) presents feedback loops that continue to inform sustainability and scalability. What is learned from the delivery side of the process will continue to inform, reshape, and even

redefine the **operational** side (**vital actions, vital resources, and vital partners**). In this way, relationships established through community engagement can move to collaboration that helps grow the movement and increase community impact. **Vital actions** are identified through the **mission field, vision, and mission loop**, then inform ongoing identification of **vital resources**, before informing **vital partners**. If you engage this feedback loop as a part of the **operational** side, informed by the **delivery** side (community engagement data and emerging opportunities), your new project or social enterprise can refine its operational standards in order to scale appropriately.



Just like my example on the **delivery** side, if you expand your **operational** loop (**vital actions, vital resources, and vital partners**) to include **cost structures**, this will identify any cost increases and opportunities to streamline work/production, and allow for improvement of operational

efficiency. As new opportunities emerge through engaging the mission field, the idea is to increase revenue without increasing costs (remember the concept of economies of scale and economies of scope from chapter 12). If you do not monitor what is happening on the operational side, you could see disproportionate increases in costs without increased revenue. Remember, cash flow is the lifeblood of any business; therefore, managing it is vital to your continued success.

If you do not lean into a process of optimization that allows for evaluation and adjustment, you will not have a culture of innovation within your organizational structure. This is the only way to make good of the tension and the ebb and flow of the business/ministry model. This is how your organization can embrace the idea of “chaordic tension.”

Discussion Questions and Considerations for the Necessity of a Feedback Loop:

1. Identify the areas in your business/ministry model where feedback loops will be important?
2. How will you utilize this process of evaluation and adjustments to keep moving toward sustainability and scalability?

CHAPTER 16

Additional Resources

There are a number of additional resources that can assist you in this work. In addition to the list below, the IV Team is your primary resource for supporting your efforts. Do not hesitate to reach out.

Other Resources:

Sample Strategic Plan — The linked PDF is a sample strategic plan for Kick Axion Development, a fictitious organization used for illustrational purposes. This sample was written using the process outlined in Chapter 14. You can download a copy of the Kick Action Development Strategic Plan (SAMPLE) at the following [\[link\]](#).



Sample Financial Projections — The linked PDF is a sample financial projection for Kick Axion Development, a fictitious organization. While it is included in the above strategic plan, it is offered here as a separate download. The development of this sample projection was achieved using the

The image shows a screenshot of a financial projection table for "Kick Axion Development Financial Projections (Sample)". The table is a complex spreadsheet with multiple columns representing different financial metrics and rows representing different time periods. The table is color-coded with various shades of blue, green, and yellow. The columns include "Revenue", "Cost of Sales", "Gross Profit", "Operating Expenses", "Operating Income", "Interest Expense", "Interest Income", "Income Before Taxes", "Income Tax", "Net Income", "Depreciation", "Amortization", "Capital Expenditures", "Cash Flow", "Total Assets", "Total Liabilities", and "Total Equity". The rows represent different time periods, including "2020", "2021", "2022", "2023", "2024", "2025", "2026", "2027", "2028", "2029", "2030", and "Total".

cost structures and revenues streams building blocks of the New Place Startup Process. You can download a copy at the following [\[link\]](#).

Helpful Books to Consider — The following list of book recommendations covers topics highlighted in the book as a whole, all of which are specific to the change theory practices of inclusion, innovation, and multiplication.

- ***Everywhere You Look: Discovering The Church Right Where You Are***, by Tim Soerens (InterVarsity Press, 2020) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***The Art of Gathering: How We Meet and Why it Matters***, by Priya Parker (Riverhead Books, 2020) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***Stay Woke: A People's Guide to Making All Black Lives Matter***, by Tehama Lopez Bunyasi and Candis Watts Smith (New York University Press, 2019) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***Embrace: God's Radical Shalom for a Divided World***, by Leroy Barber (InterVarsity Press, 2016) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***The Myth of Equality: Uncovering the Roots of Injustice and Privilege***, by Ken Wytsma (IVP Books, 2017) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***Church Forsaken: Practicing Presence in Neglected Neighborhoods***, by Jonathan Brooks (InterVarsity Press, 2018) — [\[link\]](#)

- ***Many Colors: Cultural Intelligence for a Changing Church***, by Soong-Chan Rah (Moody Publishers, 2010) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***The Death of Race: Building a New Christianity in a Racial World***, by Brian Bantum (Fortress Press, 2016) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***Community: The Structure of Belonging***, by Peter Block (Berret-Koehler Publishers, 2018) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***The Abundant Community: Awakening the Power of Families and Neighborhoods***, by John McKnight and Peter Block (Berret-Koehler Publishers, 2012) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***The Lean Startup: How Today's Entrepreneurs Use Continuous Innovation to Create Radically Successful Businesses***, by Eric Lies (Currency, 2011) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***WE Economy: You can find meaning, make a living, and change the world***, by Craig Kielburger, Holly Branson, and Marc Kielburger (Wiley, 2018) — [\[link\]](#)
- ***Business Model Generation: A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers***, by Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur (John Wiley and Sons, 2010) — [\[link\]](#)

GNW IV Team Recipe Cards — Check our helpful recipe cards and other resources from the IV Team at the following [\[link\]](#).

GNW Resisting the Sin of Racism — Additional resources — [\[link\]](#)

About the Author

William Gibson is a culture geek, innovator, and theological entrepreneur, serving as the Director of Innovation and Team Leader for the Innovation Vitality Team of the Greater Northwest Area, the largest geographic episcopal area in the United States. Focusing on new leadership, new places, and new people, he works with community leaders and United Methodists in Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, and Washington, as well as small parts of Canada.



Prior to a move to the Northwest, and upon a foundation of ministry with youth and young adults, he served more than 13 years in three appointments, all of which focused on new church development in the Western NC Conference of The UMC. His last church plant, THE WALK, created and advocated space for the LGBTQIA community, worked against poverty and homelessness, helped form Tiny Houses of Greensboro, supported Church Under the Bridge, and fought for justice of marginalized people.

He is passionate about engaging the skeptical, unchurched, disconnected, and frustrated — “Nones” and “Dones” — in ever-shifting culture. Before full time ministry, William spent more than 16 years working in marketing and business startup, where his focus was corporate identity, interactive branding, and his niche of image marketing. He has led and participated collaboratively in a number of new startup businesses, supported by more than 5 million dollars in venture capital and angel investor funding. He is also a former U.S. Marine.

After studying graphic design (ETSU), business (Tusculum College), and biblical & theological studies (Amridge University), he attended graduate

school at Duke University where he received his M.Div. William completed his doctorate at Portland Seminary in semiotics and future studies, under his lead mentor Dr. Leonard Sweet. His doctoral research focused on cultural linguistics and the dialogic formation of Christian identity. William's dissertation, *Voices of the Imago Consumere: The Dialogic Formation of Christian Identity in American Consumer iCulture*, was published in 2012 through Portland Seminary. He has also been an active co-creator of Future Church Think Tank, which is convened annually by Dr. Sweet.

He is the author of two books:

- *SUSTAINABLE ENGAGEMENT: A How To for the New Place Startup Process* (2020, An GNW IVT Publication)
- *UNHINGED: Why the church is off the rails in a post-Christian America and what we can do about it*, (Wipf and Stock Publishers, Cascade Books, 2021, forthcoming)

William also serves in an adjunct role as a dissertation advisor for doctoral candidates at Portland Seminary. He is an ordained Elder in The United Methodist Church, who believes that everyone is welcome at God's table. William lives in Seattle, WA and has three children.

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greaternw.org/adventure
innovationvitality.org

SUSTAINABLE A **How-To** for The New Church Startup Canvas ENGAGEMENT



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