

Community Solutions Action Labs

What is an Action Lab?

An Action Lab is a **2-day, intensive planning experience**, followed by a short-duration action cycle called a **Sprint** (usually about 3 months). During the 2-day Action Lab, Community Solutions works with community teams to craft an **ambitious, short-term goal** related to a community's chosen goal area. During the Sprint, community teams work to **improve their current systems**, and track progress toward their ambitious goal. This is the basic structure we work with:



Tell me more!

During the 2-3 months leading up to the Action Lab, Community Solutions will work with your community to **set up the infrastructure** necessary to support the work of the initiative. This means collecting and analyzing some data related to your chosen problem, and reaching out to potential team members.

During the Action Lab, in addition to setting an ambitious goal, you'll design potential **system improvements**, and make an **action plan** to test and refine those system improvements. Your action plan will focus on a few key areas informed by some of the best industry knowledge in Improvement Science and Design Thinking:

- **Getting to know the needs of your end users** and developing solutions that respond directly to those needs
- Creating a system to **measure progress** toward your goal
- **Maximizing use of available resources**, and making a plan to fill resource gaps

During the Sprint, you'll **implement the action plan**, and hold regular team meetings to **track progress** toward your goal. All of this culminates in a **1-day Momentum Lab** where you'll reflect on the work of the Sprint, solidify any gains made, and set a new **ambitious, short term goal** for your community.

What will we work on?

You tell us! This approach has achieved real results in a variety of domains, including employment, youth development, public safety, sanitation, and homelessness. Community Solutions provides a **structured facilitation experience**, your community fills in the content based on your wisdom and expertise.

Who should be involved?

The Action Lab model works best when it has the support of a **Leadership Team**, composed of local or state government officials, directors from agencies working in your chosen domain, and other stakeholders who hold resources that might facilitate the work of the initiative. If you're interested in bringing an Action Lab to your community, **Community Solutions can work with you** to identify the appropriate parties to bring to the table before we get started.

What are some results from other communities?

The Action Lab model has been used in a number of contexts to achieve **real results**. In Virginia, this model helped 5 communities increase (and sometimes double) their **housing placement rates for homeless Veterans**. In Brooklyn, New York, a community used this model to **reactivate a senior center**, to serve as a resource for the broader community. In Newburgh, New York, this model was used to **bolster transportation infrastructure** to allow residents to more easily find employment.

Who can I contact for more information?

To get the ball rolling, find out if an Action Lab might be appropriate for your community or for more information on logistics and pricing, contact Paul Howard at phoward@cmtysolutions.org.