



Addressing Homelessness in Topeka Using the Path to Innovation Approach

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BY

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FIRST...

Some Level Setting...

Brianna Sylver has been hired as the city's innovation coach, not as a consultant.

WHAT DOES THE “INNOVATION COACH” DO?

- My job is to facilitate and coach a team of 8 – 12 individuals in using the Path to Innovation methodology to find effective solutions to address its concerns around homelessness.
- I am a process expert, not a technical expert.
- I also have no preconceived notions on what your community should do to address its concerns around homelessness.

WHAT DOES THE “INNOVATION COACH” NOT DO?

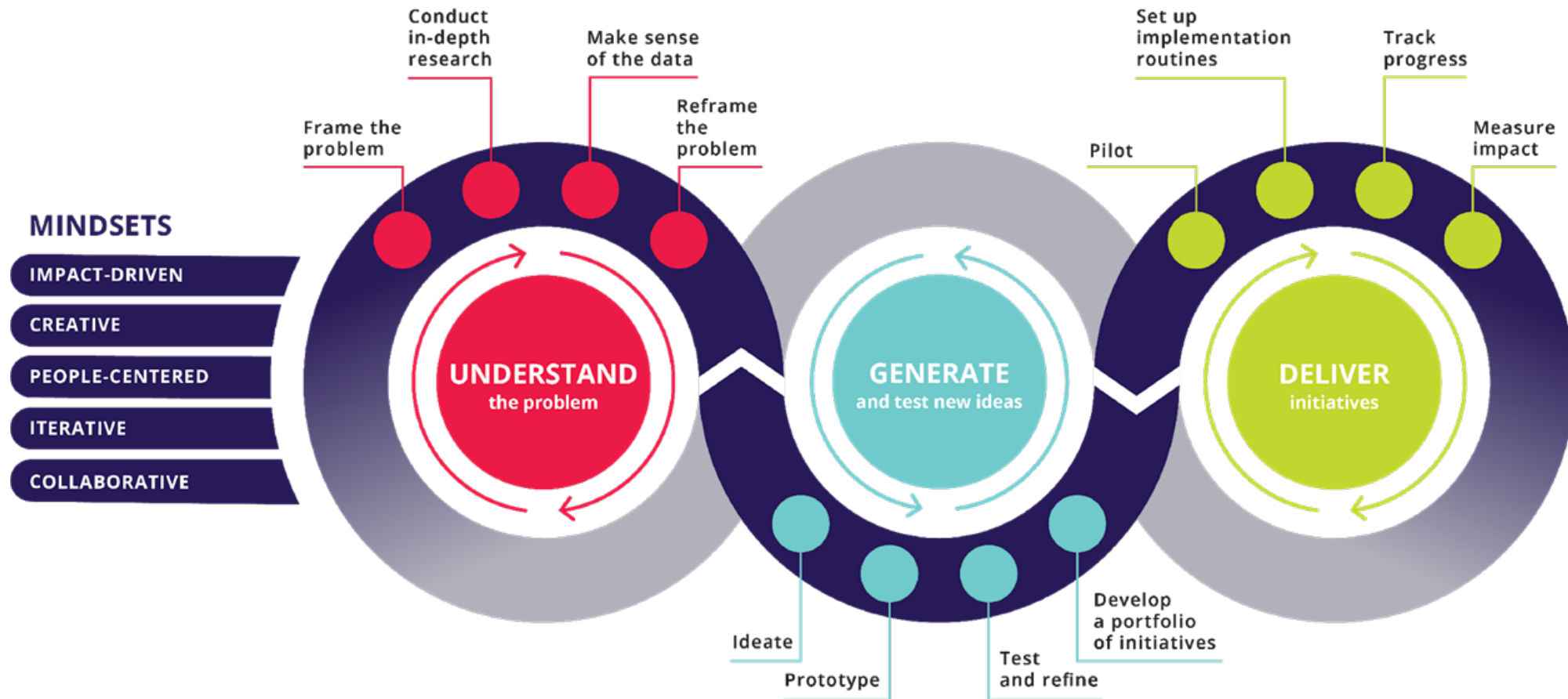
- I will not create the solution(s) that your community pursues out of this work scope. Your community will.
- A core working team will lead that charge (under my process guidance), but the whole community will contribute to it and will own its outcomes.



NOW...

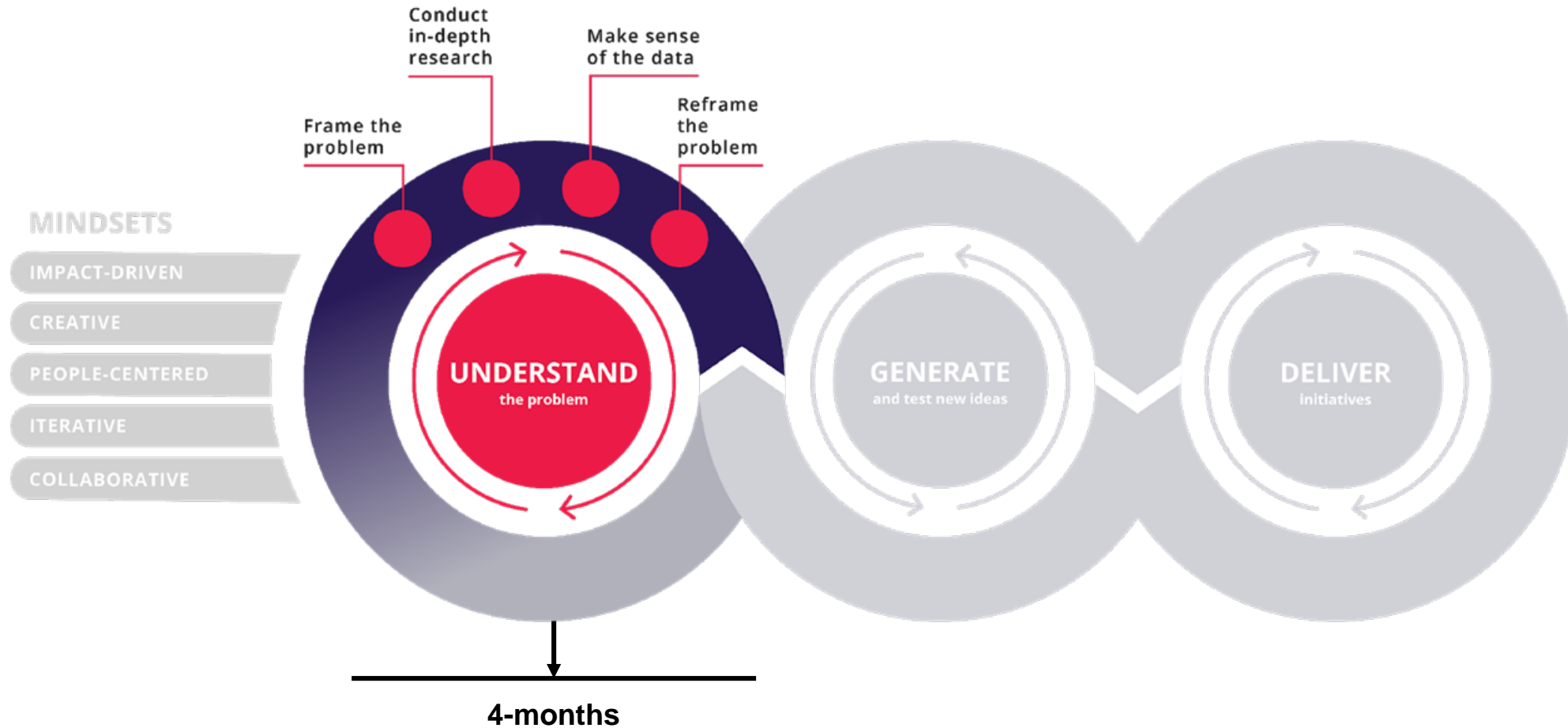
What is the Path to Innovation Process?

The Path to Innovation: Comprised of 3 modules of support



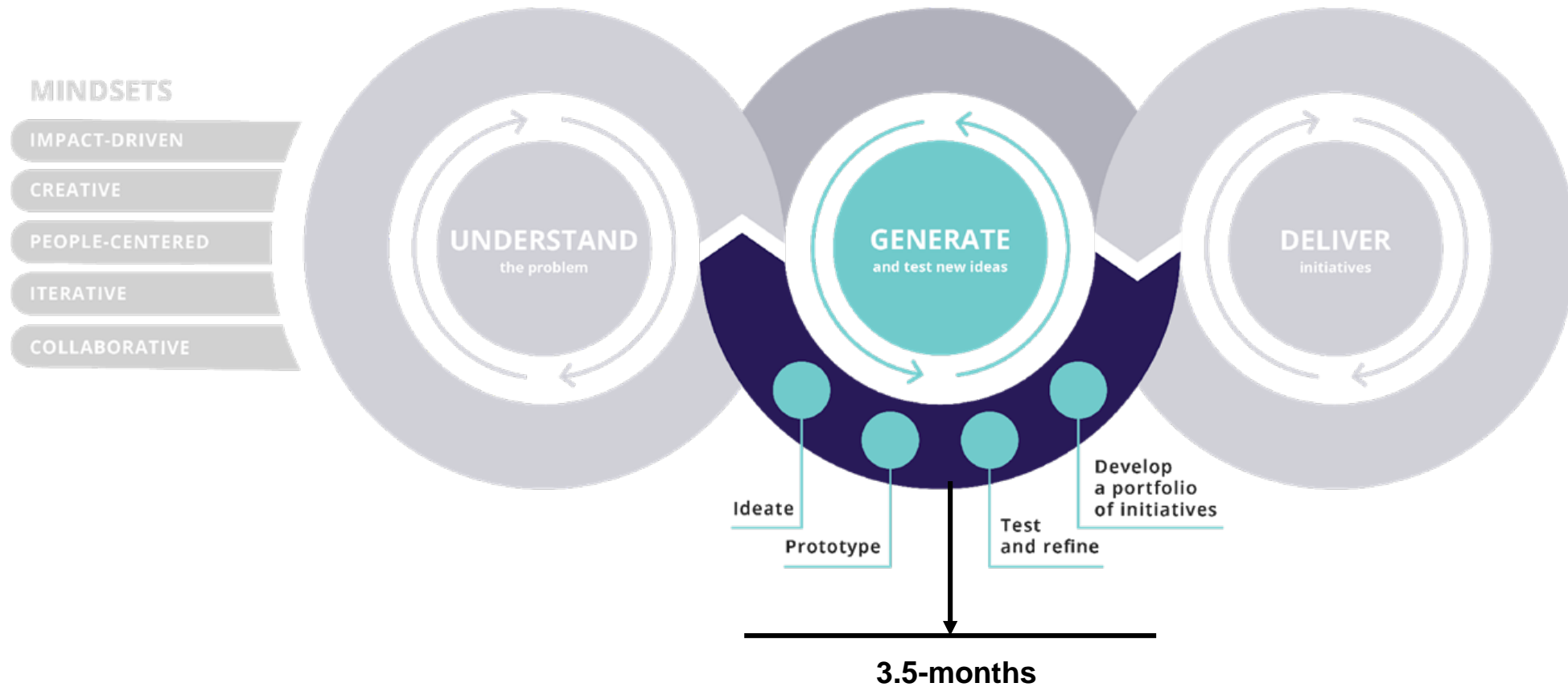
GOAL OF

UNDERSTAND: Fall in love with the problem



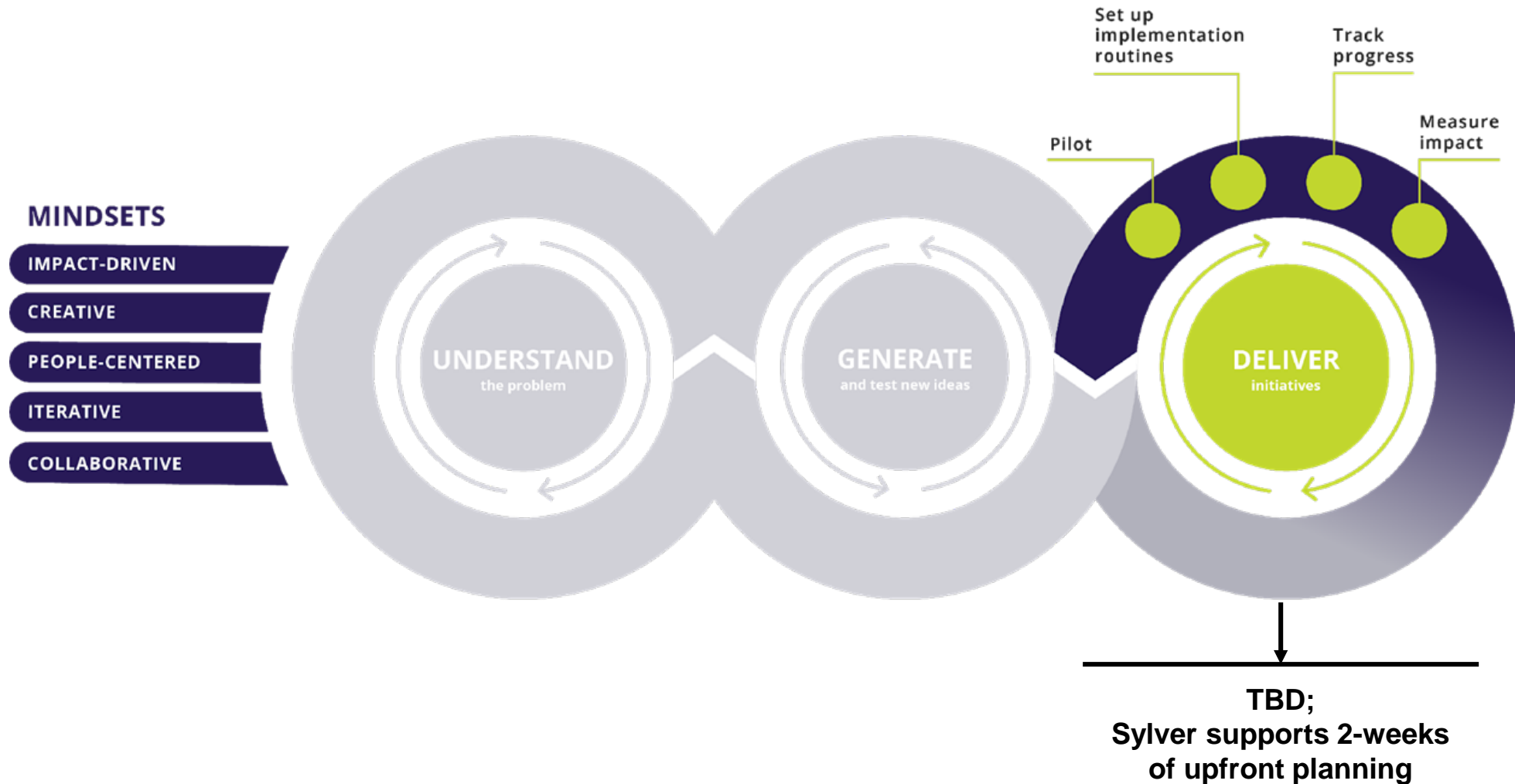
GOAL OF

GENERATE: Shape ideas for maximum impact

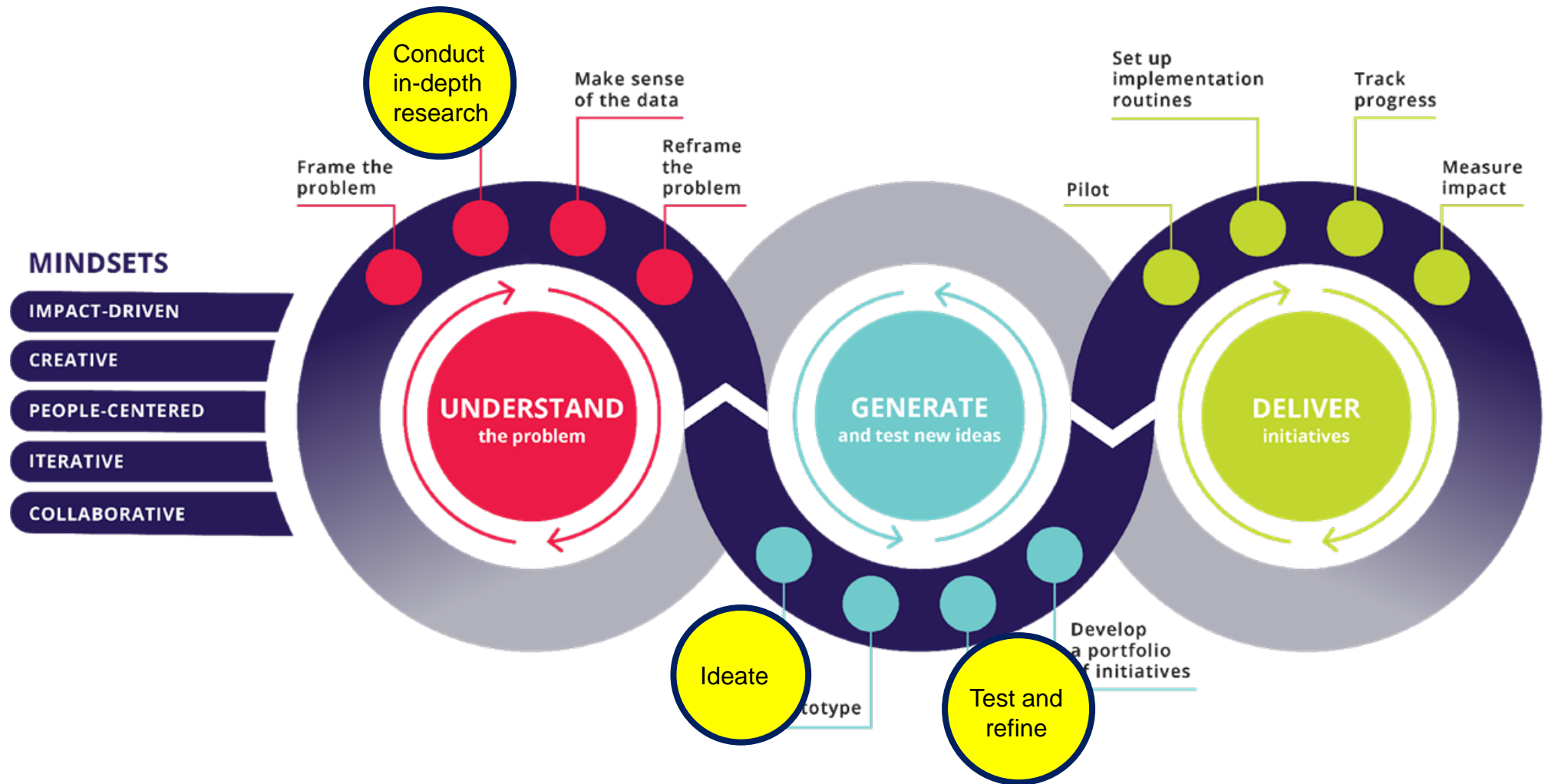


GOAL OF

DELIVER: Implement solutions into the world

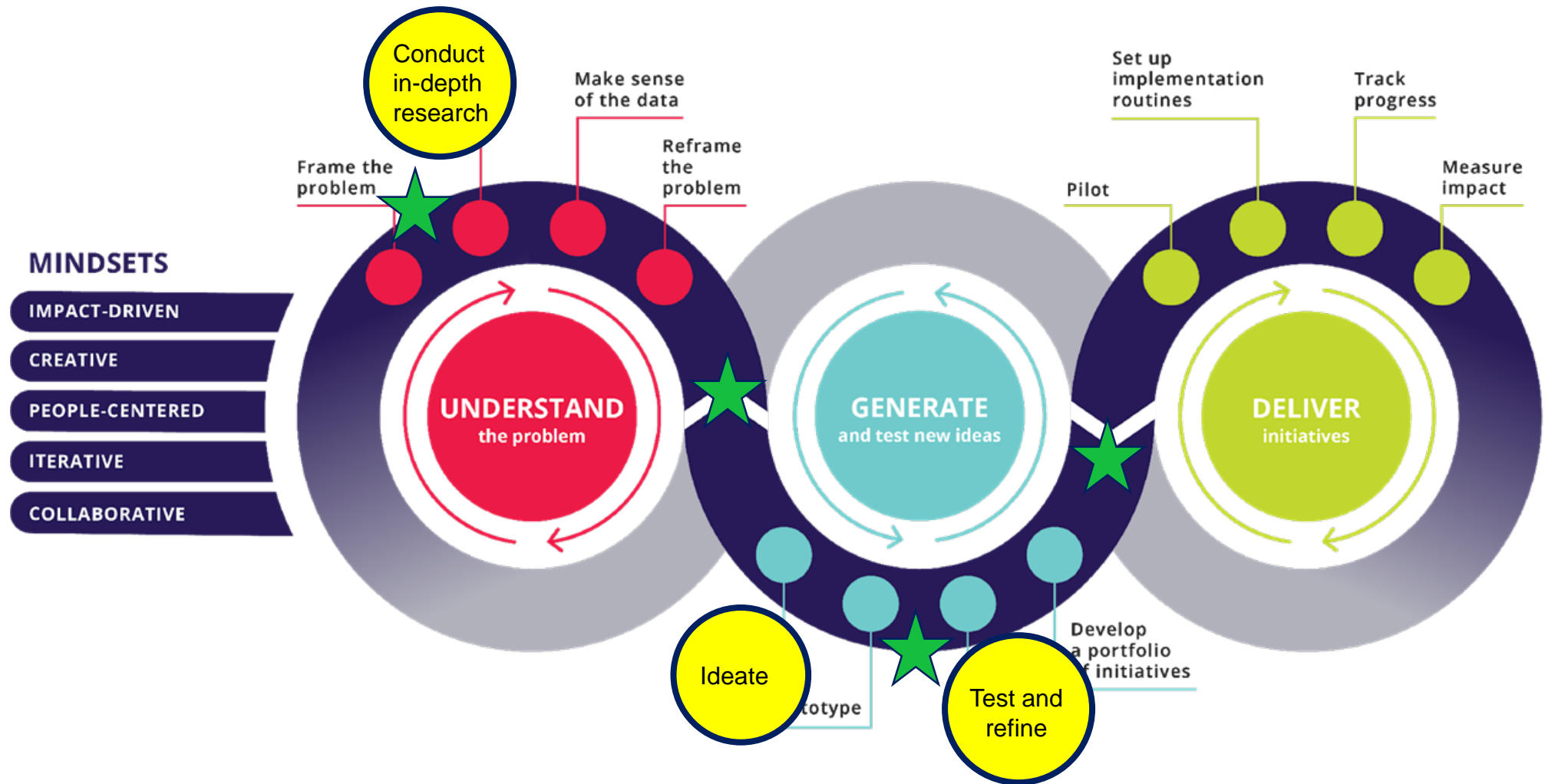


Solutions generated are community-driven



● Points in process where community engagement occur

Governing Body updates occur along the way – 4 planned



Timeline of events to date...

FEBRUARY 2023

Council approved scope of work.

Path to Innovation Approach approved included three phases of work:

- Understand the Problem
- Generate and Test New Ideas
- Creation of a Delivery Plan

MARCH 2023

City was tasked with defining the core working team for the initiative (8 – 12 team members including City staff and community members).

City struggled to do this, knowing how broad and complex this issue is and how many organizations are already working in the community to serve the unsheltered population.

Decision was made to host a Homeless Summit, which would identify where the community was gapped in existing resources.

APRIL 2023

Homeless Summit occurred. Housing was noted as a gap area.

COT and TRM visited Colorado Springs and the Denver Rescue Mission to see how other cities have addressed housing needs of their communities.

Sylver Consulting and COT discussed pivoting the project plan (start at “testing of new ideas” instead of “understanding the problem”) given that the community had identified housing as a primary gap at the April Homeless Summit.

Timeline of events to date... (cont.)

MAY 2023

City Manager Steve Wade confirmed the work plan pivot, which would allow the team to spend more time in the Test & Learn steps of the Path to Innovation vs. starting at the “Understand the Problem” phase.

A potential core team for the project was identified — inclusive of both City staff and community members.

JUNE 2023

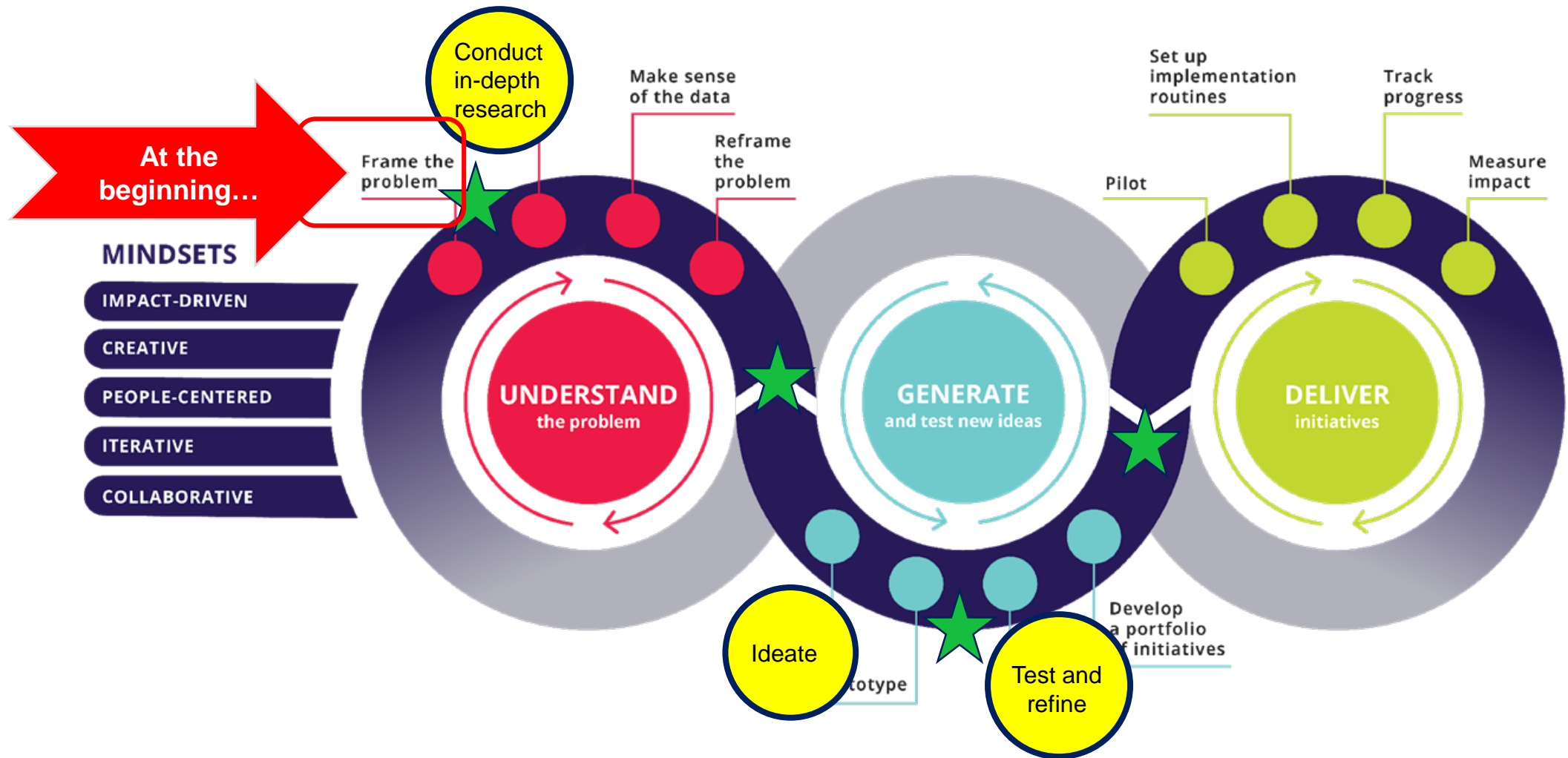
A 1.5 day workshop was facilitated to scope the project and our charge. The project scoping exercise in the workshop landed on the following project focus statement:

The focus of our project is to use analytic data to understand the root causes of homelessness and move public opinion, policy, and resources towards the coordinated implementation and operation of a low barrier shelter and other services that break the cycle of homelessness and catch those that fall in the gaps.

JULY 2023

Based on Council needs expressed, new City Manager Richard Nienstedt has requested that we pivot back to the original work scope of the project.

Where we are today...



What you gain from this process...

- A portfolio of community-driven solutions for addressing the challenge of homelessness in the Topeka community (5 – 10 generally).
- Two of those community-driven solutions prototyped and tested with members of your community.
- An impact measurement and next step implementation plan for two of the solutions in the portfolio of ideas (often the two community-driven solutions).

What's needed to move forward?

A team of 8 -12 core working group members who:

- Have 5 hours a week to devote to this process (on average) over the next 8 months.
- Who are willing to fall in love with the problem before committing to a solution.

Thank You!

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