



Power Ahead Colorado: Innovation Pilot Program Updates

December 2025

An aerial photograph of rolling green hills, likely in the Philippines. The hills are covered in lush green grass and are illuminated by warm, golden light, creating a sense of depth and texture. A small herd of sheep is visible on a ridge in the lower right, providing a sense of scale. The overall mood is serene and natural.

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Who We Are



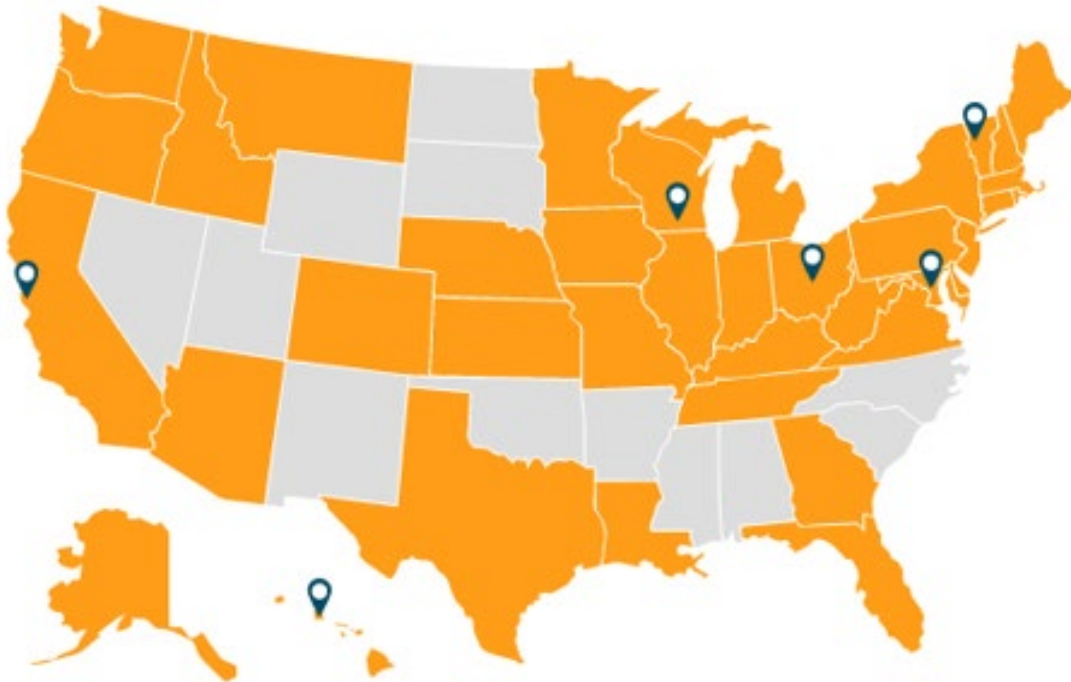
Driven by purpose, committed to impact

VEIC is on a mission to generate the energy solutions the world needs.

- VEIC works with organizations across the energy landscape to create immediate and lasting change
- We serve as an objective partner for our clients as they navigate complex energy challenges
- Every challenge is different, but our commitment is the same: make an impact

Our footprint

National reach, local approach



 VEIC offices

Where we work

**Innovative clean energy
expertise to move us forward**

Over 400 employees across
6 offices

Consultants, engineers, policy experts, M&V specialists, program designers, project managers, marketing experts, consumer insights specialists, researchers, and analysts



Program Strategy and Process



*The Innovation Pilot Program is a grant program designed to fund targeted, innovative pilots that **test approaches to overcoming market barriers** to building decarbonization that are in the early stages of market development.*

*By testing these transformation approaches, the Innovation Pilot Program will promote the **development and refinement of interventions that can be scaled** into regional solutions.*

- Innovation Pilot Program RFP



Power Ahead Colorado

Innovation Pilot Program

What makes an innovation truly capable of transforming a market rather than just improving it?

How can small-scale pilot projects lead to system-wide change in how we electrify our buildings?

Project Metrics

- Award up to \$4 million in grant funding
- Up to 25 projects across 3 rounds



Model for Transformation

Invest in the untested and unknown



Build Market Infrastructure

Strengthen capacity to participate



Inform and Scale

Span across all *Power Ahead Colorado* activities

Beyond an Incentive Program

What **barriers** are we up against?

Low Awareness &
Interest

Low Perceived
Customer Value

Workforce Gaps

Misaligned Policies



REQUIRES A MARKET TRANSFORMATION APPROACH

If our goal is to support innovative and equitable market transformation, what are
our **conditions for success**?

Uncover Innovation

Reach
Communities
Where They Are

Build Capacity

Correct
Understanding of
Market Barriers

Beyond an Incentive Program

..and **more than** just a series of pilots.

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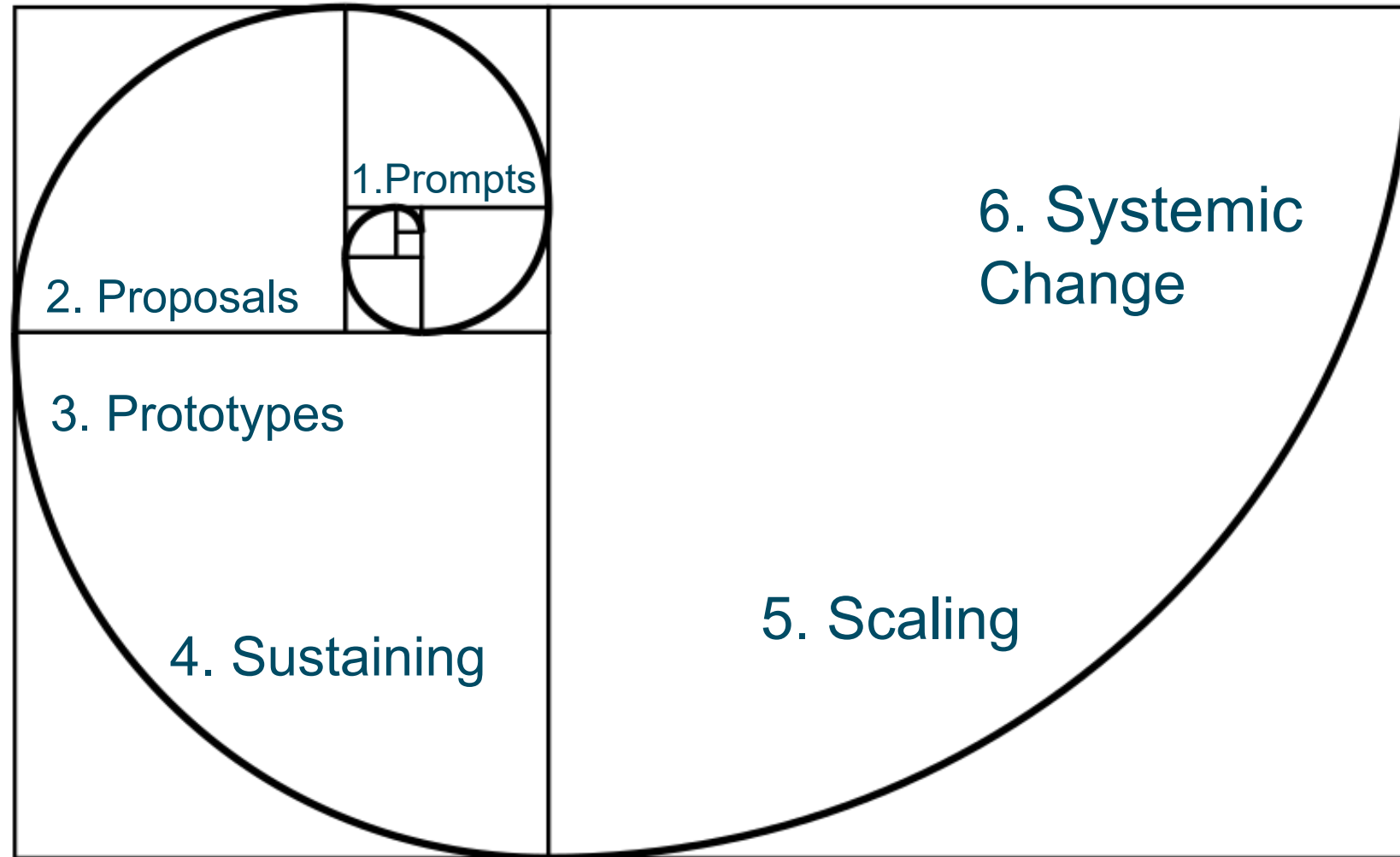
SOLUTION: ADOPT PROCEDURAL EQUITY BEST PRACTICES

Access dimension : how easy is it for people to learn about, qualify for, and apply to the program?

Procedural dimension : Who is at the decision - making table? Does our framework ensure *all voices* are heard?

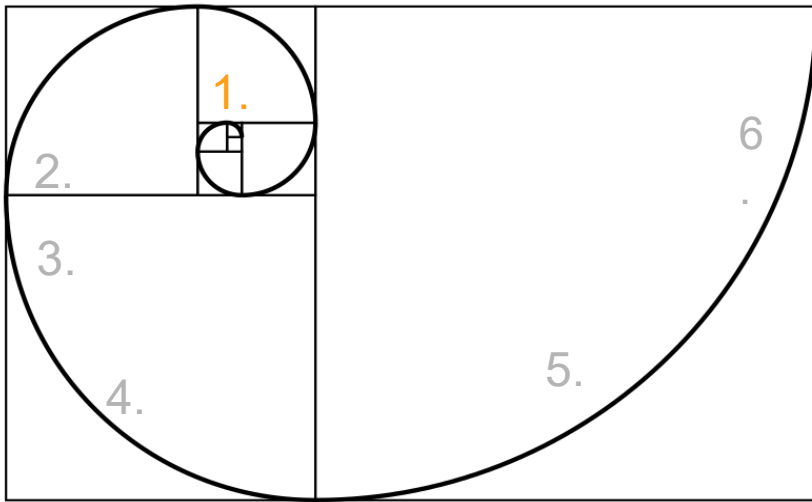
MAIN CHALLENGE: HOW DO WE OPERATIONALIZE IN A GRANT PILOT PROGRAM?

A Framework for Innovation



Adapted from *The Open Book of Social Innovation*

Innovation refers to new or significantly improved products, services, processes, or strategies that drive measurable progress toward our goals.



1. Prompts

**Diagnosing problems
by their *root causes*,
not just the symptoms.**

Uncover Innovation

Reach
Communities
Where They Are

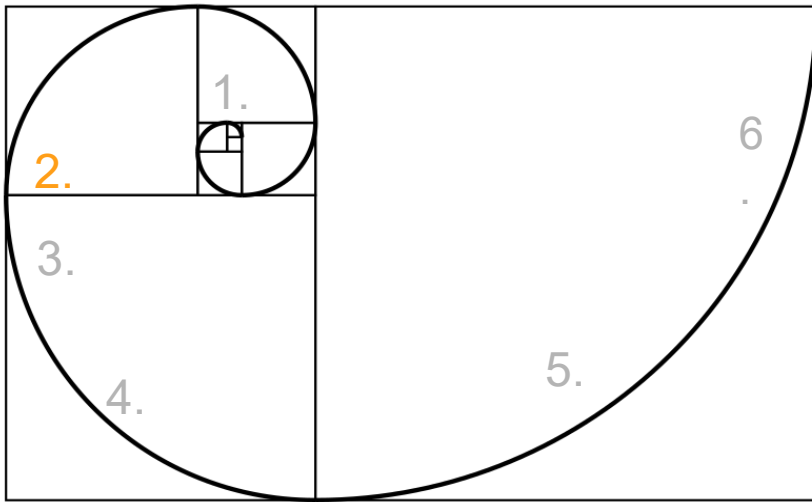
Build Capacity

Correct
Understanding of
Market Barriers

Challenge our
assumptions and
biases

Solicitation
designed to reach
diverse audience

Seek external voices to define problems and contribute to solutions



2. Proposals

Ideation to broaden the creative solutions available at our disposal.

Uncover Innovation

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Build Capacity

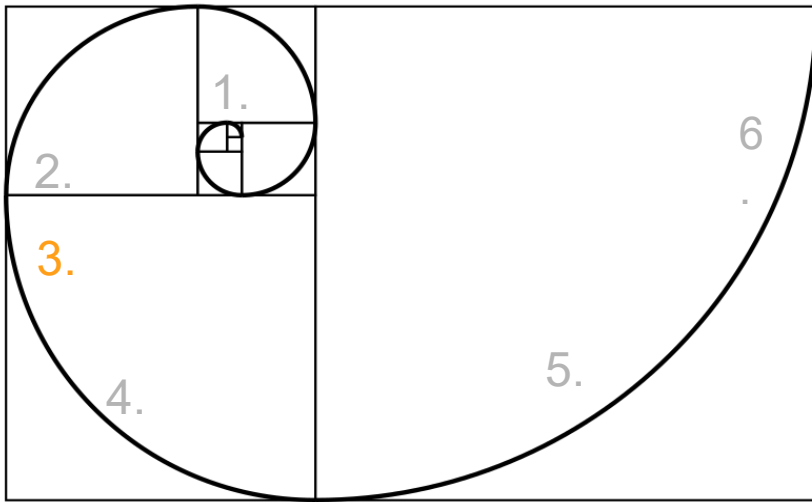
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Expand the network
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3. Prototypes

The practical stage of
“trying things out” -
iterating with a mutual
vision of success.

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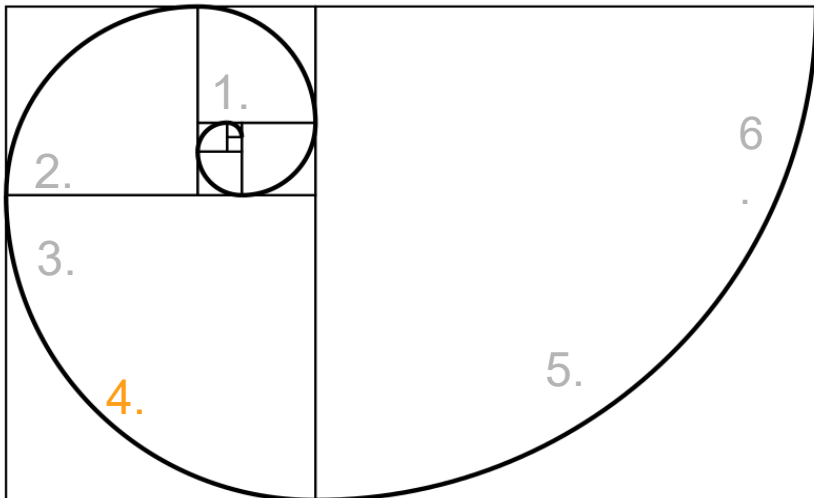
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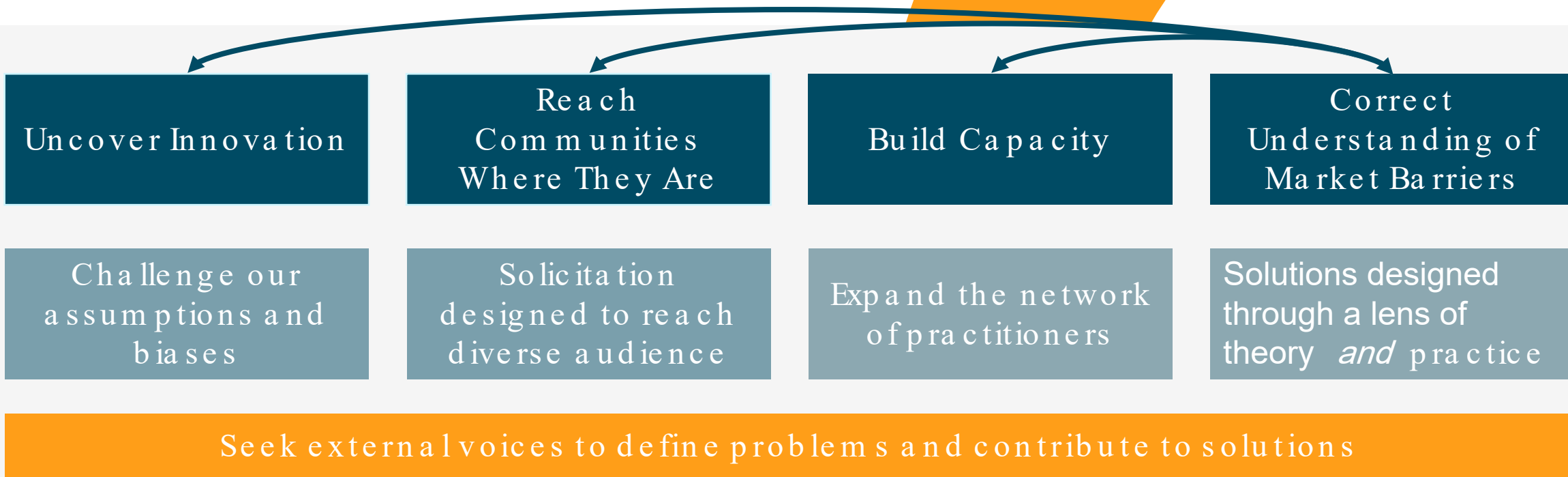
Solutions designed
through a lens of
theory *and* practice

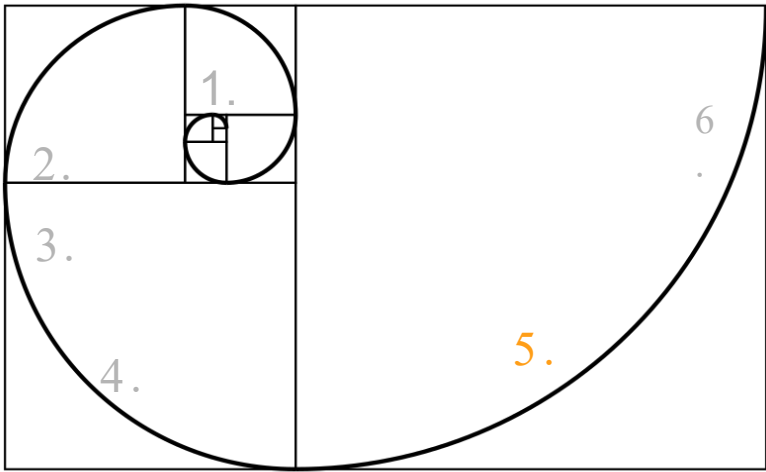
Seek external voices to define problems and contribute to solutions



4. Sustaining

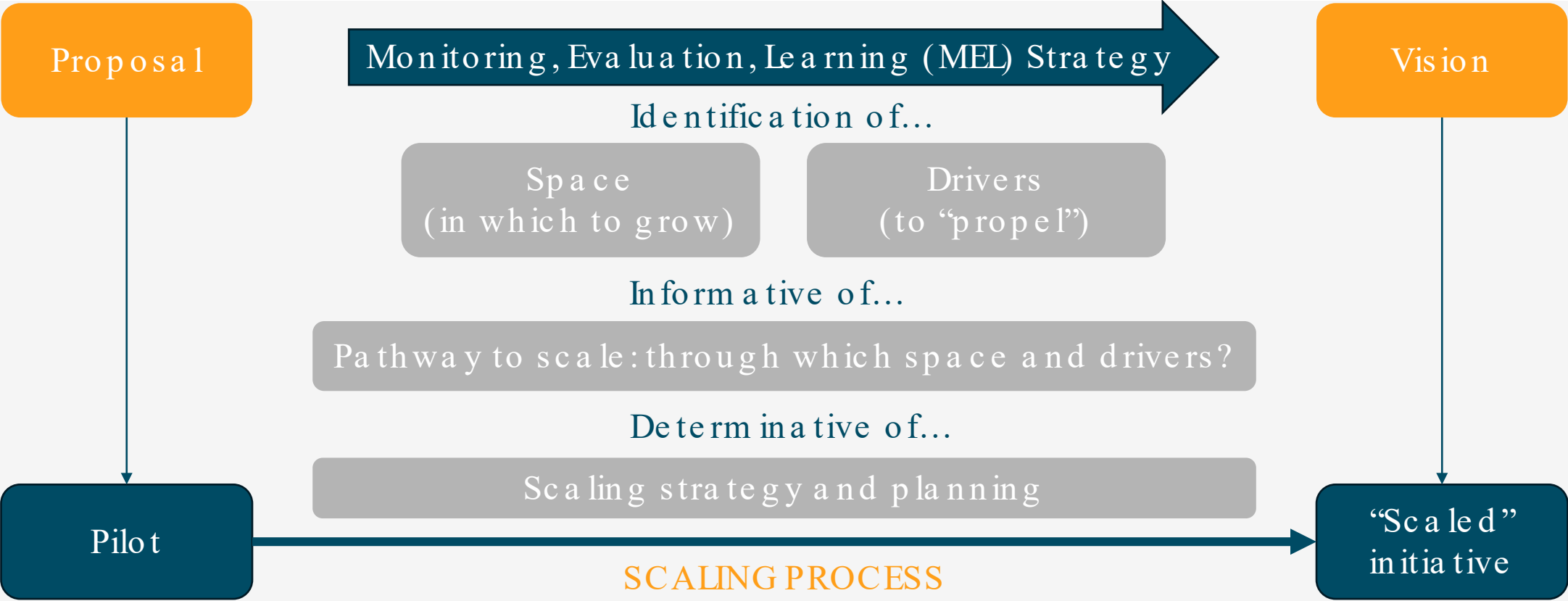
Refining promising ideas through a vision of how an innovation will be carried forward.

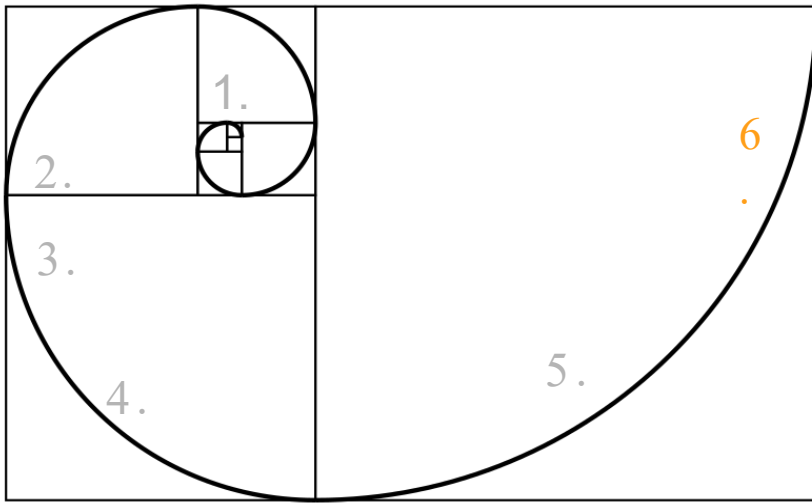




5. Scaling

A range of strategies to mobilize and grow impacts.





6. Systemic Change

Cumulative effect of many small innovations that create new ways of thinking and doing.

What needs to happen for our goals to be achieved?

- VEIC must implement a **responsive and equity-driven pilot program** that identifies high-potential innovations, supports their execution, and rigorously evaluates their outcomes.
- The program must **foster a learning community** among grantees and stakeholders to share insights and adapt strategies.
- Successful pilots must be **translated into scalable models** and integrated into DRCOG's broader beneficial electrification efforts.
- Technical, financial, procedural barriers **must be actively addressed** through targeted outreach, flexible design, and ongoing support.

An aerial photograph of a dense green forest. A dark, straight road or path runs diagonally from the bottom left towards the top right. Along the left side of this road, there is a line of trees with lighter green foliage. To the right of the road, the forest continues, but with some visible tracks or paths. On the far right side of the image, there is a large, white, semi-circular graphic element that partially obscures the forest. The overall lighting is soft, suggesting a late afternoon or early morning scene.

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Where We Are
Today

Timeline



2025

Program Planning &
Implementation



2026 - 27

Two cohorts of grant
projects awarded



2027 - 29

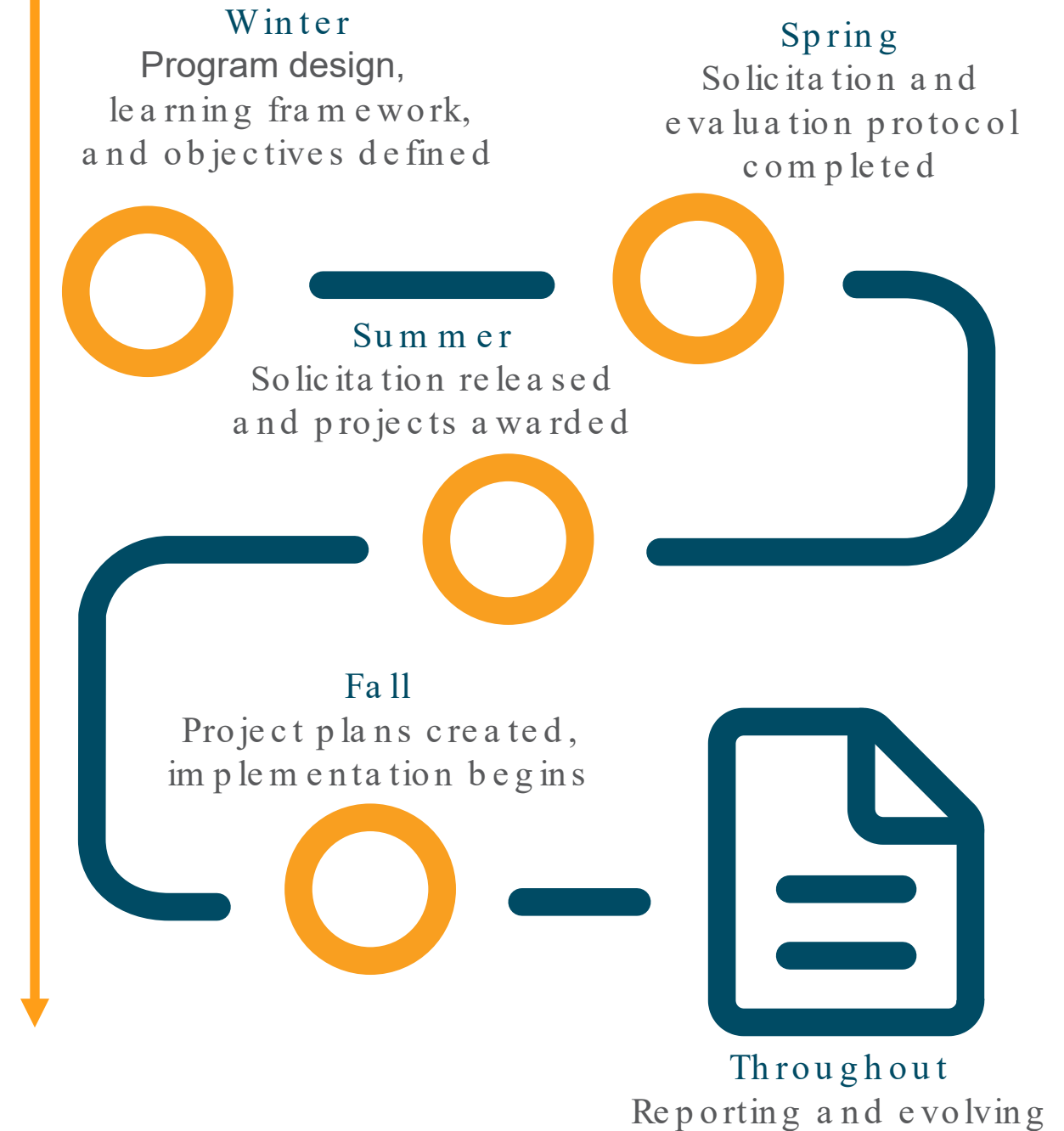
Third cohort of grant
projects awarded and
program reporting

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Model to iteratively refine approach, improve strategies, and scale impact

Roadmap for the First Cohort of Grants



Cataloguing Market Barriers and Opportunities

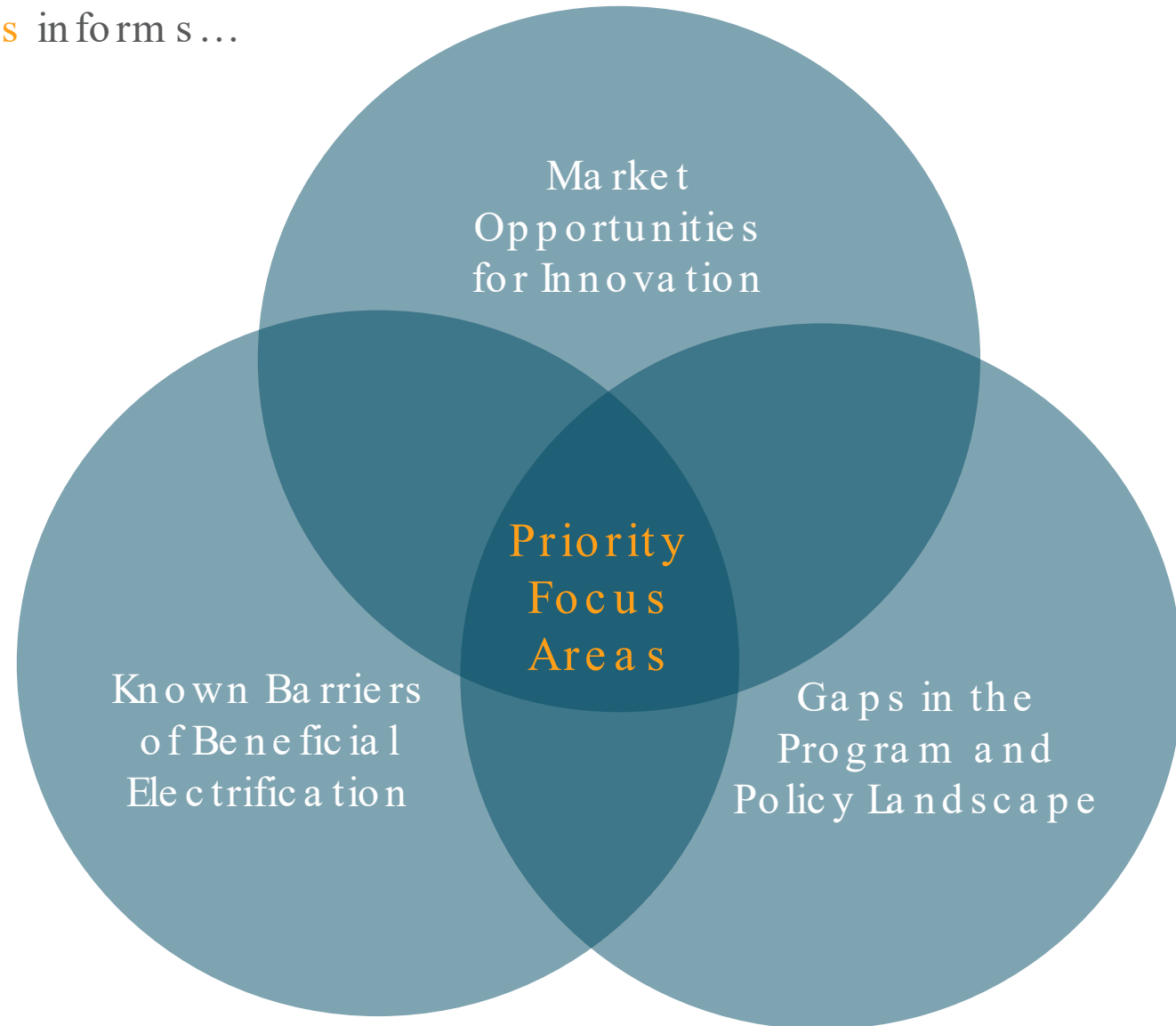
Mapping **policy, program, & market barriers** in forms...

Solicitation language and project selection:

Ensure that the eventual portfolio reflects a diverse set of projects that acknowledge and unlock priority solutions.

Engagement and dissemination strategies:

The program is designed so that grantees are well-connected to key stakeholders who can inform, unlock, and eventually scale solutions.



(Some) Common Barriers and Solution Sets

Workforce Training and Contractor Readiness

- Workforce placement programs within energy trades
- Smart tools and diagnostics training to support business growth and efficiencies

Electrification Enabling Measures

- Support for minor home repairs and remediation
- Power efficient design approaches

Customer Education and Outreach

- Community - based partnerships and presence
- Showrooms for technology testing

Access and Affordability

- Utility allowance and split incentive solutions
- Electrification - friendly rate structures

Regulatory

- Programs allowing for fuel switching and capturing NEB's
- Policies to enable gas system decommissioning

Cost Reduction and Financing

- Integrated demand response solutions
- Partnerships for low - or no - cost financing and preserving affordability

Technology Innovation

- Low- GWP refrigerant solutions
- Efficient electric heating for cold - and mountain - climates

Equipment Standards and Codes

- All electric or electric - ready code
- Zero- emissions appliance standards



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Discussion

Highlights from Prior Committee Call:

What are your questions for the Innovation Program?



How might we...

- work alongside established community hubs to showcase the trades and technologies?
- bolster existing home repair and weatherization programs to build healthier homes for all through electrification?
- authentically expand our reach and build awareness around the benefits of heat pump technologies?
- support contractors in becoming promoters of heat pump technologies?
- make heat pump technologies more visible and desirable for consumers?
- address the deeply - rooted and systemic barriers preventing adoption?
- build a more collaborative network to better serve residents and reduce administrative friction?

Collaborative Discussion

Breakout 1: Vision and Impact

- Assuming a 2050 target for a ligning market transformation with state and utility net-zero goals, what areas will accelerate outsized impact?
- Which innovations will maximize:
 - Energy reduction
 - Cost savings (consumer and public)
 - Pollution reduction
- How can DRCOG create feedback loops from pilot learnings to existing programs and policies? Which areas are ready for iteration?
- Who needs to be at the table to inform priority barriers to address and support dissemination of pilot outcomes?

Breakout 2: Program Design & Market Barriers

- Which policies listed strike you as particularly relevant or reveal major gaps in the Colorado market?
- What assumptions or biases have proven wrong in your work on building decarbonization in Colorado?
- Where have programs focused to date and faced implementation challenges?
 - What were those challenges or barriers to success?
 - What has been attempted in the past and might be ready to revisit?
- Who are the key stakeholders to engage for sourcing ideas and testing solutions?



Get in touch

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