HPAC IDEAS in Action

One project, five steps, start to finish

A worked example for student leaders | Health Professions Affinity Community

THE MODEL

IDEAS is a cycle, not a checklist

1

Identify

Find the issue, using what your community already has

2

Develop

Build the plan, the team, and the budget

3

Enact

Do the work

4

Assess

Measure what changed, honestly

5

Share

Tell partners, funders, and the field

What you learn in Assess becomes the next Identify. Most groups run the cycle more than once.

Adults sign for space, money, and permissions. Students make the decisions in every one of these five boxes.

THE WORKED EXAMPLE

Northside HPAC

The setup

- Nine students, grades 9 through 12
- Meets Tuesdays at lunch, 30 minutes
- Adult sponsor: biology teacher, signs for space and funds
- Student lead, project manager, outreach lead, money lead, documentation lead
- No budget at the start. None.

What they were looking at

- No full grocery store within 2.6 miles of the school
- Students taking extra food from the cafeteria on Fridays
- An unused courtyard, 40 feet by 25 feet, locked since 2019
- A church pantry three blocks away
- A grandparent who has gardened for forty years

This is a composite example, assembled from real HPAC projects. Your issue and your assets will be different. The sequence will not be.

1 Identify

Choose the issue you can actually move, using evidence and the assets already around you.

What good looks like

- Name the condition, not the behavior
- Bring one piece of local evidence
- Map assets before you list needs
- Pick something you can finish by spring

Where groups go wrong

- Choosing in the first meeting
- Choosing what the adults suggested
- Choosing an issue so large that nothing you do will show
- Writing a wish list instead of an asset map

STEP 1 IN ACTION

What Northside found

The evidence they gathered

- County health needs assessment named food access a top three priority
- School survey, 118 students: one in four said food ran short at home in the past month
- Their own count: 31 students took extra cafeteria food on three observed Fridays

The assets they mapped

- Locked courtyard, 40 by 25 feet
- Biology room with grow lights
- Church pantry with cold storage, three blocks away
- Garden center one mile away
- A grandparent, and the county extension master gardeners

What they chose

- Not: end hunger at Northside
- Instead: get fresh produce into students' hands every week by May, using the courtyard
- Small enough to finish. Big enough to matter.

Two meetings. That is what it cost them to choose well.

2 Develop

Turn the issue into a plan with names, dates, money, and a way to tell whether it worked.

What good looks like

- One sentence goal, with a date
- Every task has a name attached
- Ask partners for specific things
- Collect your baseline before you launch

Where groups go wrong

- A plan that lives in one person’s head
- A budget line that reads only supplies
- Asking a partner for general support
- Forgetting the baseline, which cannot be collected later

STEP 2 IN ACTION

The Northside plan

The goal, in one sentence

By May, Northside students can take home fresh produce from a student-run stand every Friday, grown in the courtyard.

Partners, and the exact ask

- Garden center: 14 bags of soil by April 1, donated
- Church: use of cold storage on Fridays
- Extension master gardener: two visits, planting and troubleshooting
- Facilities: courtyard key and water access

The mini-grant budget

Lumber, 3 raised beds	$180
Seeds and starts	$60
Hand tools, 6 sets	$45
Watering timer and hose	$15
Requested from mini-grant	**$300**
Donated soil and storage, in kind	**$95**

Baseline collected in October, before a single bed was built: 118 student surveys, and produce distributed to date, zero.

The project cost $480 to run. They asked for $300, because they had already secured the rest.

3 Enact

Do the work, document it while it happens, and keep going when something breaks.

What good looks like

- Photograph and count as you go
- Keep every receipt in one place
- Report to partners during, not only after
- Expect one thing to fail and plan the recovery

Where groups go wrong

- Documenting at the end, from memory
- Letting one person carry the whole project
- Hiding the failure from the funder
- Stopping when the first plan does not work

STEP 3 IN ACTION

What actually happened

OCT — Courtyard unlocked. Baseline survey collected.

NOV — Two Saturdays, three beds built, 14 volunteers including 5 parents.

DEC — Seeds started under grow lights in the biology room.

JAN — **The watering timer failed over break. Every seedling died. Six weeks lost.**

FEB — Group asked the garden center again. Donated starts replaced the loss.

MAR – MAY — Nine Friday produce stands. Surplus went to the church pantry.

The January slide

They put the failed timer on their poster, in the results section, with the six weeks it cost.

The judges asked about it more than anything else on the board.

So did the funder, who renewed.

4 Assess

Measure what changed, compare it to the baseline, and report what did not work alongside what did.

What good looks like

- One count and one change measure
- Same question, same way, before and after
- Report the disappointing numbers too
- Name what you would do differently

Where groups go wrong

- Measuring only how it felt
- Changing the survey between rounds
- Reporting attendance as if it were impact
- Skipping the step because the year is over

STEP 4 IN ACTION

What changed, and what did not

41 lbs
produce distributed over 9 weeks

212
student visits to the Friday stand

104
follow-up surveys, from 118 at baseline

What did not work

- Friday afternoon missed every student who rode the 2:40 bus. The people with the least access were the ones who could not stay.
- The timer failure cost six weeks of growing season and about half the expected yield.
- Only two of nine members ever handled the money. Next year, three people learn the budget.

That first line became next year's Identify.

5 Share

Tell partners, funders, your school, and the wider field what you found, including what you would change.

What good looks like

- Poster or presentation at Scholars Day
- A result report to every partner within two weeks
- Students present, adults are acknowledged
- Hand your contacts and files to a successor

Where groups go wrong

- Sharing only the good numbers
- Letting the adult present the students’ work
- Thanking partners privately and never again
- Graduating without a handoff

STEP 5 IN ACTION

Where it went, and what came back

1 Scholars Day

Three students presented the poster. Every member was named as an author.

2 Partners

A one-page result report with one photograph went to all four partners within two weeks. The garden center asked to be listed for next year.

3 School board

Five minutes at a regular meeting. Facilities agreed to run a water line to the courtyard over the summer.

4 Handoff

Budget, receipts, contacts, survey, and poster file went to a sophomore who had shadowed the lead since March.

The water line is the sustainability win. It cost the students one five-minute presentation and it outlasts all of them.

YOUR CALENDAR

September to Scholars Day

SEP

Recruit

Interest meeting, roles, meeting time, adult sponsor confirmed

OCT

Identify

Asset map, evidence check, issue chosen, baseline collected

NOV

Develop

Plan, partners contacted, mini-grant submitted

DEC – MAR

Enact

Do the work, document, count, keep receipts

APR

Assess

Follow-up data, compare to baseline, write up what failed

APR – MAY

Share

Poster, Scholars Day, partner reports, handoff

Adjust the months to your calendar. Do not adjust the order, and do not move the baseline later than October.

YOUR TURN

Five questions to answer before you build anything

1	What is the issue, and what local evidence says so?	One number from a county assessment, a school survey, or your own count.
2	What assets already exist within reach of this group?	People, spaces, organizations, skills, equipment. Not money.
3	What will be different by May, for whom?	One sentence. If you cannot write it, the project is still too big.
4	What are you measuring, and when is the baseline?	One count and one change measure. Baseline before launch, no exceptions.
5	Who does what, and who takes over when you graduate?	Names on tasks. A successor named before the last quarter.

Start where you are.
Use what you have.

Northside had a locked courtyard and nine students. That was enough to start.