



Before You Dive In

PREFACE



It's high time to open new doors to sustainable financing structures. Take a minute to find out how to get ready.



Before You Dive In

Let's try something: imagine for a moment that the only way communities could finance investments in affordable housing or community development was through grants—and no other financing alternatives, such as low-income housing tax credits, Section 8 vouchers, or community development finance institutions, were available. The truth is, without the benefit of alternative financing options, it would be nearly impossible for communities to revitalize neighborhoods or produce a significant number of affordable housing units.

Both community development and population health efforts endeavor to address critical social needs, yet the former has established a variety of sources of funding that are both *sustainable* and *dedicated*. Sustainable means that the source provides revenue over the long-term (think 15-20 years or more—way beyond a typical grant cycle of three-to-five years!). Dedicated, in this case, means it provides a source of funding specifically for population health that is available across many regions.

Without these sustainable or dedicated sources, population health efforts depend almost exclusively on grants. In fact, according to [ReThink Health's 2016 Pulse Check on Multisector Partnerships survey](https://www.rethinkhealth.org/tools/pulse-check/)¹, 89 percent of multisector partnerships addressing health and well-being rely on grants, with only slight use of any financing options that might be considered more sustainable. Don't get us wrong: it's not that grants are bad! In fact, population health couldn't have gotten to where it is now without them. It is, however, unrealistic to expect grants to fund all of the impressive population health work happening in our communities, indefinitely.

Where are the dedicated, widely-available sources of funding for population health?

They don't exist yet.

However, there are emerging efforts to address this deficit. ReThink Health, for example, is investigating models of reinvestment as well as tax credits for population health. In the meantime, you do have options—and this workbook can help you tap into them.



Work is being done—by ReThink Health and other like-minded organizations—on the policy level to create more doorways to sustainable and dedicated funding sources for population health.



Opening New Doors

As someone working to improve population health and well-being, you've probably seen or heard about other cities and regions that have opened doors to innovative sources of funding: sugar-sweetened beverage taxes, new payment models, or even public appropriations (for more, see [A Typology of Potential Financing Structures for Population Health](#) in [Module 3](#)). But those examples seem exceptional rather than the norm, and it probably feels like most of those doors are closed to you. You may feel like the only open door leads to grants, but that doorway is jammed with countless other organizations competing for limited grant dollars.

So while there aren't yet dedicated sources of sustainable funding widely available for population health, there is good news. There are doors that lead to sources of funding that are *more* sustainable. And work is being done—by ReThink Health

¹ <https://www.rethinkhealth.org/tools/pulse-check/>



and other like-minded organizations—on the policy level to create more doorways to sustainable and dedicated funding sources for population health. While it will likely take a number of years before those sources materialize, you do have options. You *already* are doing valuable work, and community leaders and policy makers are taking notice. While this workbook cannot create a magical source of funding for you, it can help you pick the locks on new doors to finance your work *in the meantime* and ensure you are prepared to take advantage of what's ahead. Don't get stuck waiting for someone else to open the doors for you; you can make valuable progress with what's available now. You just have to trust in your abilities and get started—and we've designed this workbook to help.

Getting Started

You don't need a special password or knowledge before you dig into this workbook, but we do want to be sure you bring a few things to this material so you can make the most of it.

A specific use. Much of this material asks you to know what *specific activity(s)* you want to finance. This could be a specific intervention(s), or your integrative activities. It's perfectly fine to use an idea that is half-baked or invent something to use as an example. But you'll get more out of this material if you *know what you want to potentially spend money on*; otherwise, you won't have the details necessary to complete the exercises. That said, we're fully in support of just reading the workbook to get smarter about financing in general or gain a sense for how the various tools might help you. And, in those cases, a specific use is less important. But again, if you're looking to apply the material, it will help you immensely to get clear on what, exactly, you're looking to pay for.

One multisector partnership or organization at a time. We know that within some communities or regions there is more than one effort focused on improving the population's health and well-being. If you work with more than one organization or multisector partnership, then you will need to identify which organization's activities you're exploring in order to get the most from this workbook. This is particularly relevant if you're coming to this workbook with questions about financing your integrative activities. If you try to engage with the material but are unclear on which organization's perspective you are considering (e.g., you are a member of both a Pre-K collaboration and a regional health collaboration and you try to represent both perspectives in your answers), you will quickly find yourself frustrated or confused. (If you want to take up the activities or perspectives of different organizations, just go through the material twice—one organization at a time.)

Dedication and willingness to do the work. Beverly Sills, a famous American opera singer, once said *there are no shortcuts to any place worth going*. This workbook offers a practical set of tools to help advance your financing, but it is not a magical black box that allows you to plug a couple of grants in one side and sustainable financing pops out the other (but someone really should invent that!). We'll walk you through the key questions, but you have to apply your experience and ambition (and a little bit of elbow grease) to generate the answers. You also have to believe strongly in the value your partnership creates and your ability to finance it; after all, if you don't, why should anyone else? Give the workbook exercises enough time so you don't short-change the discussions (and your organization in the process). Put in the time and effort and this workbook will help you decide where your hard work will have the most impact.

“ There are no shortcuts to any place worth going.

Checklist

READINESS

Do you have a specific use (intervention, integrative activities, etc.) in mind—even if it’s “half-baked” or simply a way to explore the material? YES NO

Have you identified which one organization you’ll be representing? YES NO

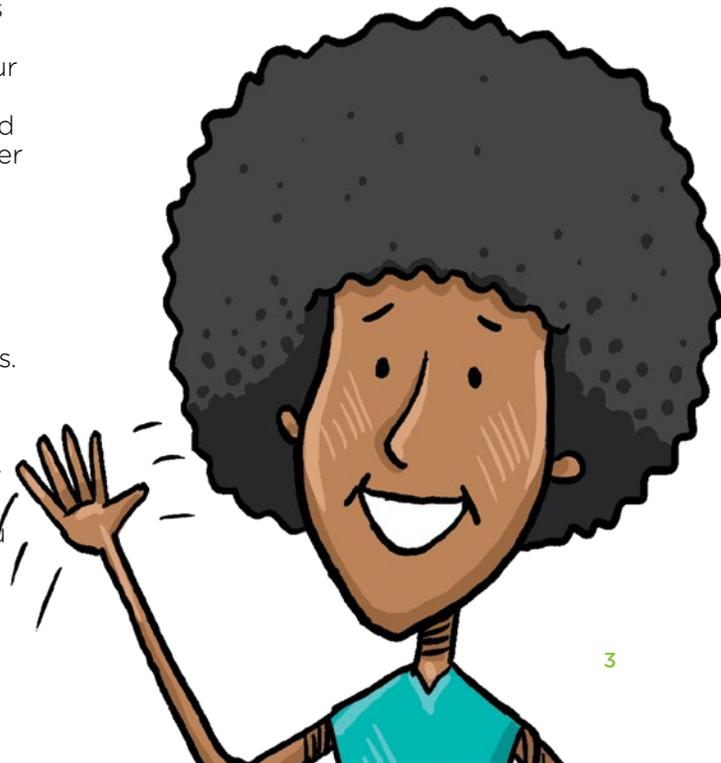
Are you ready to roll up your sleeves? YES NO

If you answered “yes” to all of these questions you are ready to get started! If you didn’t, you can still skim this workbook to learn more about financing in general.

A few more things . . .

- 1 Ground yourself in the Financing Mindset** (see [Introduction](#), page 6). The way you think about financing *matters*. A Financing Mindset opens your mind to the opportunities all around you. Try to fully incorporate this mindset into your work.
- 2 Your new mantra: I. Am. Doing. Valuable. Work.** Say it again. *I am doing valuable work.* Don’t worry if it’s just a hunch right now. This workbook—specifically [Module 5: What Value Do You Create?](#)—can help you become skilled at explaining where and how your partnership creates value. But for now, you need to be confident that your organization is already making a difference.
- 3 You are an expert.** Population health is a relatively young endeavor; the financing of it is embryonic. This workbook (particularly [A Typology of Potential Financing Structures for Population Health](#) in [Module 3](#)) suggests several sustainable sources of funding. But remember that you—as a practitioner in the field—understand your work better than anyone. You are in the best position to identify financing opportunities woven in and around your work. Don’t wait for others to invent more or easier solutions; get out and start trying to crack open new doors! (You might even discover a new door!) Your efforts can help identify solutions for others and move population health to new frontiers.
- 4 Iteration is to be expected.** Many of the exercises are stepwise and linear, and we’ll walk you through those steps. However, you’ll likely uncover information at different points in the process that impact earlier decisions or conversations. That’s to be expected. Don’t be afraid to take a step back and revisit or start an exercise over again. It’s like cooking. You have your recipe and you follow the steps, but you taste, react, and adjust as you go. (And when all else fails, you just start over!)

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Learn more at ReThinkHealth.org/FinancingWorkbook and contact us with questions and comments at ThinkWithUs@ReThinkHealth.org.

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