

# 2 Designing / Planning a solution overview


**Figure 1.** Make sure to leave enough time to design and plan an appropriate solution. ([CCO](#))

## What do I do with all this information?

In Stage 1 of your project you gathered information about a community and its problem(s) using lots of different strategies. You may have spreadsheets with data, pictures, videos, notes, recordings of interviews, observations and other kinds of information. You might feel a bit overwhelmed at this point but don't worry!



**Figure 2.** You might feel overwhelmed by information after your investigation - don't worry! ([Song, CC BY-SA 2.0](#))

Now, you need to make sense of the information you have gathered. In fact, you have probably already started that process without knowing it. During t  rimary and secondary research you probably already started to recognise the importance of some pieces of information for your project or formed some conclusions. Maybe you

ly have ideas for ways you can take action. It's natural for people to try to quickly make meaning of what they hear, see and read. If you created an idea parking lot, discussed during the [Stage 1 Investigating overview](#), now is the time to get that out again.

But it is also very important that you do not let your first understandings drive your planning process. Take the time to carefully consider all the information you have gathered. It is critical to creating the very best solution or intervention. This requires time to review and think carefully about the information from various sources to identify opportunities for design.

## Overview of designing and planning steps

### Find the findings

The first thing you will do is review the information you gathered to pull out the most important insights, or findings. What did the patterns of behaviour tell you about how people in the community are acting? What did you learn about the relationships between people in their systems? What do you know about people's mental models and how are those affecting systems and behaviour? The first thing to do is list what you found out, your findings.

### Frame a narrative

Once you have identified key findings, you can pull them together (synthesise) them into a **narrative**. A narrative is a story about a situation. Developing a narrative around the issue, problem or need you investigated allows you to develop a new mental model about the situation. This will be used to **frame** and guide the kinds of solutions that are developed.

### Brainstorm / design solutions

After you have a frame for the problem, you can start brainstorming possible solutions or interventions. This involves going wide, coming up with lots of ideas, and then going narrow. You use filters to weed out ideas that may not work, and focus in on the one(s) with the most promise. Don't be afraid to reject ideas, even if you have spent considerable time on them. The learning you did along the way to the rejected ideas, will support the ones you finally choose!





At this point, planning is essential. This involves developing **concept plans**, so that others can see what you are doing, and to help you gain support. You may need funding, which will also require you to develop a budget. This section helps you with both. Finally, you should also develop **project management plans** to enable you and others to successfully carry out your project.

Coming up with ideas and planning your project can take longer than you think, so make sure to leave plenty of time for it.

## A word on collaboration

Many projects have collaboration built in. Working with others improves the quality and diversity of ideas, so when you get a chance to have partners, take it!

But sometimes you may embark on a project on your own. When this happens, try to bring in other people for advice as often as possible, especially during your planning. Even just the act of explaining what you are doing or thinking, to someone else can make things clearer or reveal potential problems. Although another person may not have been with you throughout the research, a fresh pair of eyes and an outsider perspective can be just what you need to gain some new insights or get additional ideas.

## Works cited

Song, Benh Lieu. "Overwhelmed." Flickr, Yahoo!, 26 July 2019, <https://tinyurl.com/y7f9mq7q>.



With the support of the  
Erasmus+ Programme  
of the European Union

