SPRING IMPACT

JOURNEY TO IMPACT

Lessons from our first ten years

Introduction
What we've learned
The journey so far
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

A letter from Spring Impact's founder

As the problems facing our world grow larger, our social sector is reckoning with its value and purpose. We need to build a shared vision for the breakthrough impact we seek, partnering more effectively across funders, nonprofits, governments, and businesses. We need to better engage with new capabilities like data science and digital tools, and ensure we harness all available assets to achieve the change we're after.

'Impact at scale' remains a buzzword; widely talked about but little understood, especially when it comes to practical implementation. We know from our years of this work that scale is not about enforcing conformity or pretending there is certainty where none exists.

It's about identifying where the system and structure can be used, adjusted, or transformed for greatest impact.

It's about ensuring the people we serve actually need, value, and care about the solutions we offer.

It's about exploring operationally and financially sustainable ways to grow our impact.

It's about tracking our progress to ensure our time, money, and most importantly, our human ingenuity are best invested.

These factors make up the journey to impact because there is no simple answer, no single solution.

I started Spring Impact ten years ago out of a frustration with seeing time and money wasted by funders and organizations re-inventing the wheel and not learning from one another. Many ambitious teams limited themselves and their impact simply due to a lack of understanding of how they might scale their work. In recent years we have evolved our approach based on systems thinking, lean innovation practices, and our many lessons learned from our years of experience in implementing scale.

Our goal is to create a supportive ecosystem for every mission-driven organization with the ambition to create a dent in the size of a social problem. This issue remains just as frustrating today but the opportunities to collaborate, partner, convene, and influence one another across the social sector are increasing. And we know the need for scalable solutions is becoming more urgent.

We've spent 10 years helping mission-driven organizations to scale their impact. We initially set out to support 10 organizations on their journey to impact by 2018, and to-date we have collaborated closely to build transformative capacities for over 250 organizations. From this decade of practice we have distilled our five main lessons. These lessons are not only meant for organizations that would like to scale their impact, but also funders that would like to better understand scale and how they can support their grantees to more effectively achieve the impact they seek. Beyond this, we hope these lessons will be informative for the sector at large.

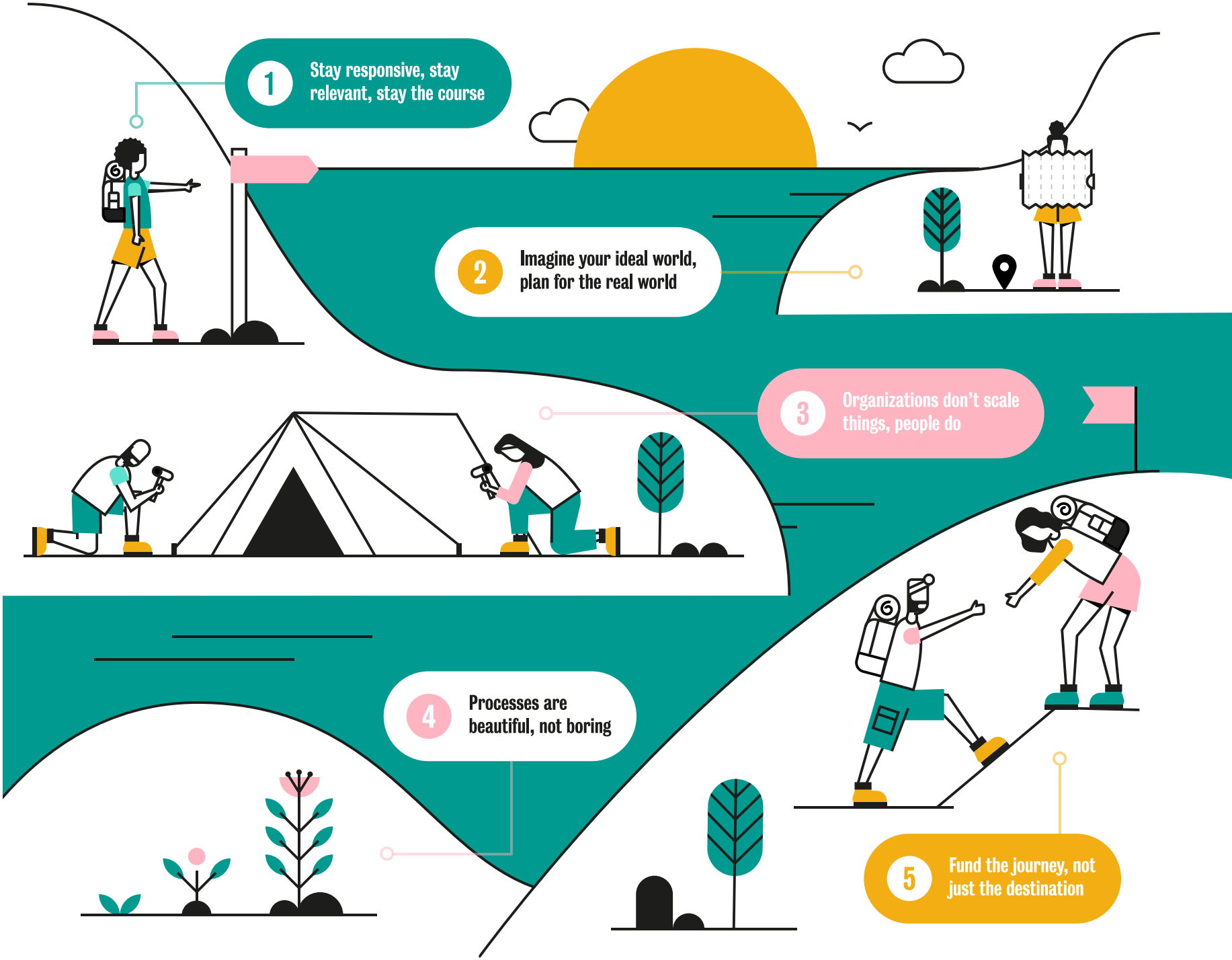
Each of our lessons—and the wider evidence in this report—demonstrates the value of building a practical framework for the plans, systems, and processes that organizations need to turn an ambitious mission into action at scale. Whatever uncertainties 2021 and beyond brings, we know organizations that take these lessons to heart can adapt and overcome them.

Finally, I would like to thank all the many Spring Impact team and board members who have contributed to this work and thinking over the years, and give particular thanks to all our board members and three board chairs in the first 10 years—Chris Underhill, Kathryn Vizas, and Peter Freedman—for their guidance and support of our vision. Spring Impact could not have had a smarter and more dedicated group of people on our journey to create impact at scale.

Dan Berelowitz, Founder & CEO

Introduction
What we've learned
The journey so far
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

What we've learned



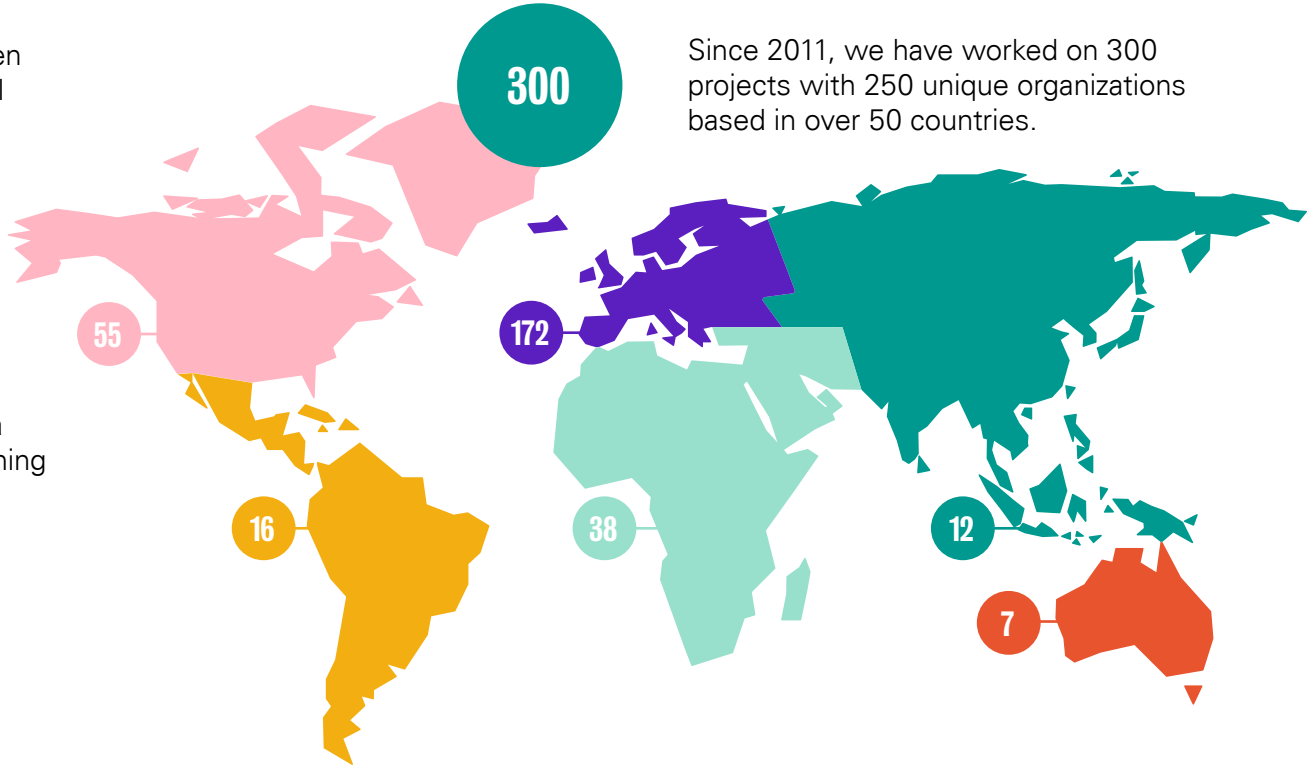
Introduction
What we've learned
The journey so far
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

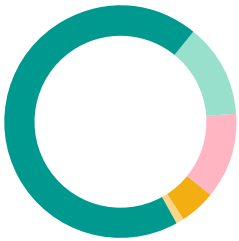
The journey so far

At Spring Impact, we work to strengthen the global practice around scaling social impact through deep partnerships with organizations, and by developing and sharing insight. This summary of our lessons learned is part of our commitment to sharing practical knowledge about scaling impact.

Our organization began by focusing on social franchising—replicating an intervention in a new location through a franchising agreement—before broadening our focus to replication via a range of models, and to other forms of scaling. Now we apply a systems change lens to our work with partners to help them achieve sustainable change regardless of which form of scaling they choose.

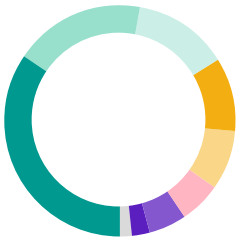
Since 2011, we have worked on 300 projects with 250 unique organizations based in over 50 countries.





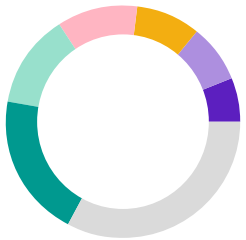
Partner type

- Non-profits 68%
- Funders 13%
- Social enterprise 13%
- Public sector 5%
- Other 1%



Area of impact

- Health 35%
- Social welfare 18%
- Economic participation 13%
- Education 10%
- Social sector strengthening 8%
- Environment 6%
- Social justice and human rights 5%
- Food security 3%
- Arts and culture 2%



Target populations

- Youth and children 33%
- Other 20%
- Women and girls 13%
- People living in poverty 11%
- People experiencing mental illness 9%
- Unhoused people 8%
- People with disabilities 6%

Introduction
What we've learned
The journey so far
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

When we started this work our goal was to

"assist 10 social solutions to replicate their impact by 2018."

We wanted to help organizations in the social sector increase their impact by deploying replication and franchising practices that were perfected in the private sector.

We're proud to say we exceeded this goal, helping

12 standout organizations

to successfully bring their solutions to new locations by 2018.

You can read more about the amazing partners we worked with below, and detailed case studies can be found on our **website.**

THE BOMA PROJECT

The BOMA Project empowers women in the drylands of Africa to establish sustainable livelihoods, build resilient families, graduate from extreme poverty, and catalyze change in their rural communities.

CHILD PIP

Child PIP is a mortality review process that assesses the quality of care children receive in the South African health system.

CHILDREN'S UNIVERSITY TRUST

Children's University works in partnership with schools to develop a love of learning in children by encouraging and celebrating participation in extra-curricular activities in and outside of school.

CULTIVERT

CultiVert is a network of independent entrepreneurs that aims to improve nutrition and economic growth in rural communities, addressing challenges including lack of market access, food insecurity, malnutrition, and undernutrition.

Children's University

Introduction
What we've learned
The journey so far
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

LaveMae[x]

STREET BUSINESS SCHOOL

Street Business School is on a mission to end extreme poverty by empowering women as entrepreneurs, through teaching other organizations how to implement their proven and effective business training.

NSPCC

The National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children is leading the fight against child abuse in the UK and Channel Islands.

LAVAMAE[X]

LavaMae[x] is a nonprofit accelerator changing the way the world sees and serves our unhoused neighbors.

SPEECH BUBBLES

Speech Bubbles is a national primary school drama intervention in the United Kingdom supporting children's communication skills, confidence and wellbeing.

SISTEMA.BIO

Sistema.bio works with smalholder farmers to address the challenges of poverty, food security, and climate change, by providing access to innovative biodigester technology, training and financing to make farmers more productive.

DANCE4LIFE

Dance4Life empowers people with the knowledge, skills and confidence they need to protect their health and promote safe sexual choices.

RECOVERY CAFÉ

Recovery Café provides a beautiful, safe, drug and alcohol-free community space to anchor individuals in their recovery. The Recovery Café Network (RCN) is comprised of Member organizations committed to creating spaces that serve as refuges for healing and hope, helping individuals transform their lives.

THE FLOW COACHING ACADEMY

The Flow Coaching Academy—a program of Sheffield Teaching Hospitals NHS Trust—exists to enable staff in every healthcare organization to continuously improve patient care and experience.

Beyond these 12 standout organizations, we have supported organizations in many other ways than just replication. We've helped our partners to see that other routes to scale could be more impactful for them and guided them through their implementation.

Across these last ten years and all the organizations we've worked with,

five crucial lessons stand out.

JOURNEY TO IMPACT

Introduction

The journey so far

What we've learned

Lesson 1

Staying responsive

Staying relevant

Staying the course

Lesson 2

Lesson 3

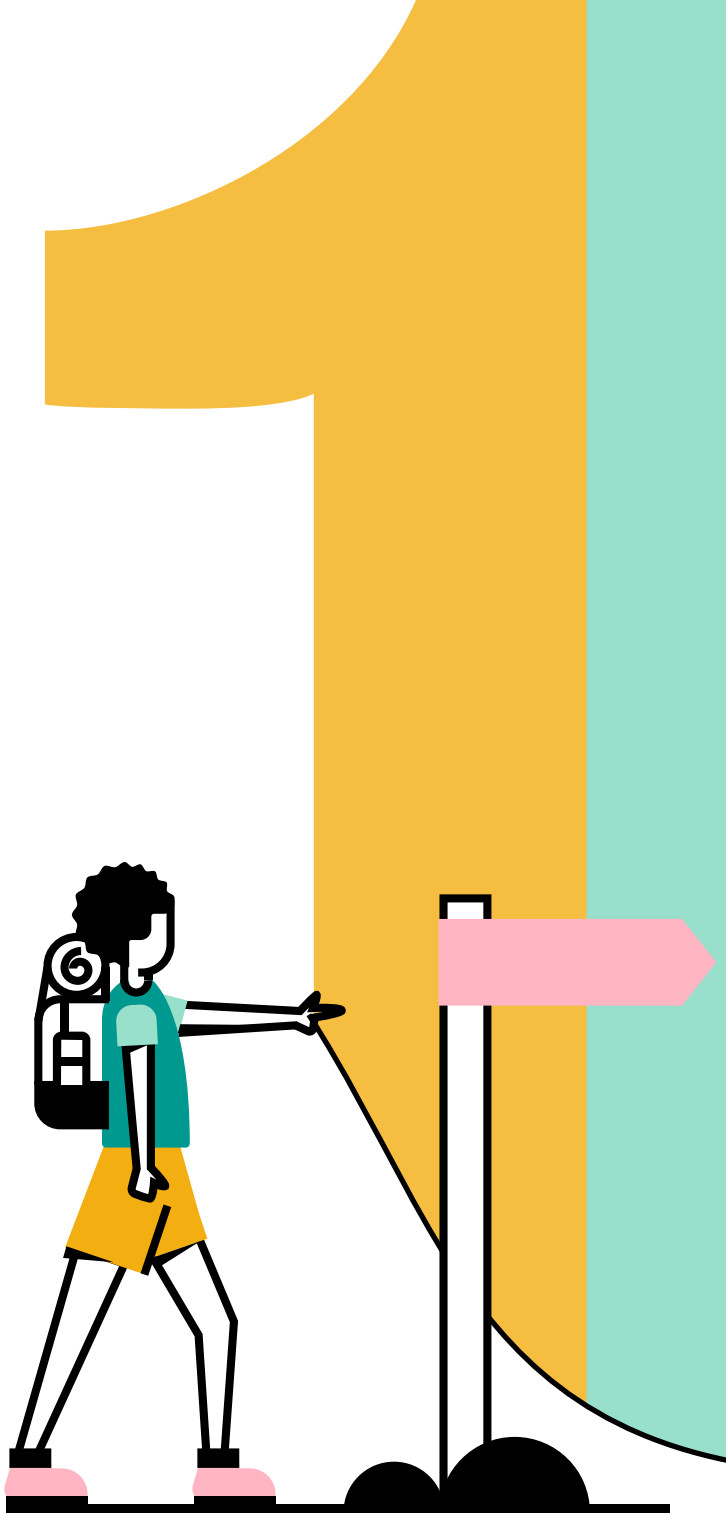
Lesson 4

Lesson 5

So what next?

Acknowledgements

Contact us



LESSON 1

Stay responsive, stay relevant, stay the course

This lesson is all about striking the right balance between being focused on the goal and remaining agile along the way.

On the one hand, adaptation is all-important. Every successful organization we have worked with has had to adapt their model over time—they've had to **stay responsive**.

But organizations can't adapt beyond recognition, without a sense of continuity to their origin or a clear plan or purpose. They need a clear-eyed view of their goals to keep them on the right path—they need to **stay the course**.

So how do they achieve this balancing act? We have seen high-impact organizations learn how to **stay relevant**. These organizations build in feedback loops that help them understand whether the work they're doing right now is really working in service of their goals, and this ongoing feedback allows them to manage staying the course on their impact vision while being flexible enough to adapt when needed.

This lesson prompted us to build the lean innovation approach into our work (see pg 9 for more), and will continue to be a critical part of how we approach the next ten years.

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned

Lesson 1
Staying responsive
Staying relevant
Staying the course

Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Street Business School

Staying responsive

Street Business School adapted their model to go further, faster

Street Business School (SBS)'s mission is to end extreme poverty by empowering women as entrepreneurs, delivering an entrepreneurial training program. After working with Spring Impact to develop a strategy for scale, from 2016 to 2020, they trained 97 partners spanning 21 countries.

SBS wanted to reach one million people with their entrepreneurship training, but quickly realized their model simply wouldn't deliver this kind of scale.

So they adapted: they moved from delivering 1:1 training to partners, to testing Immersion Workshops, where one partner would bring multiple others to training. It's a simple example, but it shows how tweaking a model can open up big new possibilities.

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Staying responsive
Staying relevant
Staying the course
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Copyright – 2018
Erin Lubin/CARE

Most often, on the journey to scale, our partners have needed to pivot their model at key inflection points—for example, moving from directly delivering a service to instead equipping a network of partners to deliver a service. After some time, they might find another inflection point that needs to be unlocked to continue scaling impact, like working within a government system or identifying a policy that needs to change to unlock impact at even greater scale.

Each time an inflection point is reached, organizations need to innovate and quickly test these new ideas and collect real-world feedback that indicates how well a solution could work. We have evolved our methodology to include these field experiments using the lean innovation approach. Based on the work of Ann Mei Chang, author of *Lean Impact: How to Innovate for Radically Greater Social Good*, our team now helps organizations internalize critical skills for testing and accelerating their hypotheses for impact. Lean innovation helps organizations build the skills and agility to run fast experiments and drive feedback loops that will accelerate the pace of learning under conditions of great uncertainty.

a well-functioning feedback loop—are what helps the organization stay relevant

Staying relevant

The Flow Coaching Academy built a network for genuine mutual learning

The Flow Coaching Academy network was built within the UK's National Health Service (NHS), for the benefit of the NHS. Their mission is to enable staff in every healthcare organization to continuously improve patient care and experience. A central hub enables regional academies to deliver Flow Coaching courses, which equip their participants with team-coaching skills and practical methods to achieve sustainable improvement.

No one central organization travels around delivering training. Instead, a network of Flow Coaching Academies (FCAs) has spread across the country, operating on a social franchising model, but maintaining a close relationship with the central hub.

Those relationships—which amount to a well-functioning feedback loop—are what helps the organization stay relevant. Adaptations to the model will be first proposed by an FCA, who predicts a better, alternative solution to the current practice. If they can demonstrate an improvement, and it isn't too much of a deviation from the core mission and model, it will be systematically rolled out across the network. In a recent example, all FCAs contributed to a recent change to the core training curriculum.

It is through this learning network and central hub model that the Flow Coaching Academy assures quality and improves its core model.

For organizations, maintaining a strong relationship with the partners who deliver their solution can allow them to manage the roll out of adaptations—and learn about new discoveries from the frontline that might prompt them to adapt. It's important, too, to be genuinely customer-centric, with a direct route to finding out what users really need. These types of two-way feedback loops have proved successful for the Flow Coaching Academy (see pg 9).

Part of building and maintaining these relationships is being clear about where an innovation can adapt to local contexts, and where it needs to be fixed. Sometimes, even the fixed "core" of the model may need to change too. But, like the Flow Coaching Academy, organizations can use partner feedback to guide them on this need for adaptation, while still maintaining control.

Sometimes, organizations choose to grow their reach by providing their model "open-source" and in these cases such direct management of adaptations won't be possible. Even then, they can find ways to maintain a relationship with implementers and gather learnings. For example: our partner LavaMae[x], a nonprofit accelerator, is changing the way the world sees and serves our unhoused neighbors by helping communities set up and deliver their own mobile showers and essential care services to the streets with dignity.

In addition to offering consultations to these communities, LavaMae[x] hosts an online platform where implementers of their open-source toolkits can share knowledge with any municipality interested in providing this critical service to local unhoused populations.

It's about finding critical balance between your core and everything else

Staying the course

The BOMA Project pivoted for the chance to work with a major funder

The BOMA Project (BOMA) empowers women in the drylands of Africa to establish sustainable livelihoods, build resilient families, graduate from extreme poverty, and catalyze change in their rural communities.

BOMA had the chance to work alongside Food for Peace, a USAID-funded program. But where BOMA's Rural Entrepreneur Access Program (REAP) already worked to address one of Food for Peace's goals to tackle food security, their model required significant adaptation to address the additional goal of reducing acute malnutrition.

Thankfully, while Food for Peace's goals may not have been aimed at poverty graduation more generally, that didn't mean BOMA couldn't continue working towards that goal. BOMA decided to stretch their food security criteria to cover nutrition and child malnourishment. "For us, REAP is human-centric, and multi-level: there are ways to adapt programming to meet more than two goals," said Jaya Tiwari, BOMA's Vice President. "It's about finding a critical balance between your core and everything else."

David duChemin, and ©The BOMA Project

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Staying responsive
Staying relevant
Staying the course
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Interventions seeking to scale their impact need to adapt for countless reasons. For BOMA (see pg 10) it was a funding and partnership opportunity, but that's just one possibility.

The important thing is for an organization to never lose sight of the problem they are trying to tackle—they can anchor their adaptation in this understanding. For BOMA, while they were focused on the wider issue of poverty graduation, they knew that malnutrition and food security were key elements of this problem and that it was possible to adapt to tackle both in a way that still made sense.

This whole lesson underlines the importance of organizations having a north star and a strategy for scale. This strategy should act as the anchor from which their approach can pivot. With a clear strategy, we've also seen that funders can understand an organization's strategy and mission and are more willing to be supportive when an organization needs to pivot.

The important thing is for an organization to never lose sight of the problem they are trying to tackle

David duChemin, and ©The BOMA Project

JOURNEY TO IMPACT

Introduction

The journey so far

What we've learned

Lesson 1

Lesson 2

Understanding the system

Ideal implementers and real implementers

Testing the market

Lesson 3

Lesson 4

Lesson 5

So what next?

Acknowledgements

Contact us

LESSON 2

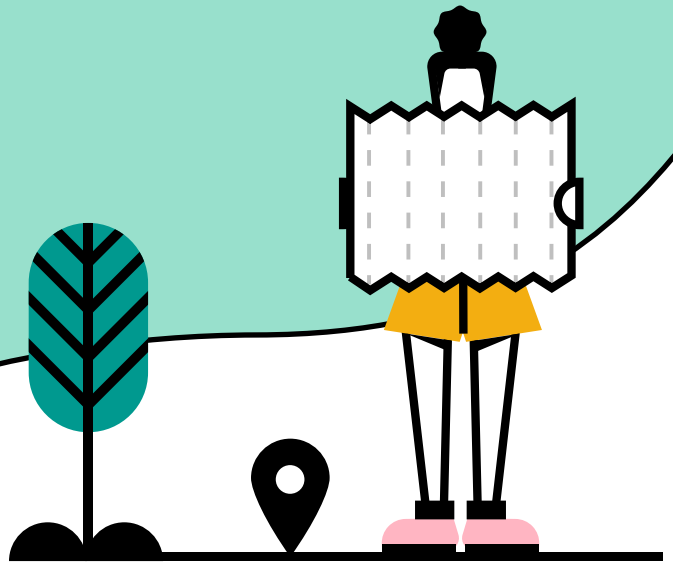
Imagine your ideal world, plan for the real world

This lesson is all about combining clarity of vision with nuanced on-the-ground understanding.

Organizations need to **understand the system** they are working within in all its complexity—that's the first step to changing it.

Part of that system is, of course, the implementing partners an organization works with to make their ideas a reality. It can be helpful to think about the **ideal implementing partner** but they need to consider who their **real implementing partners** could be as they begin their scale journey.

Part of this consideration is testing assumptions, including **testing the market** right upfront, rather than building something for a market before validating whether the market exists.



Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Understanding the system
Ideal implementers and real implementers
Testing the market
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Understanding the system

Sometimes, when designing an intervention, it's tempting to think in two dimensions: that an intervention—carefully planned, meticulously designed—will travel consistently in a straight line toward a set goal.

Reality, though, isn't two dimensional. When we reached out to past partners, nine out of ten reported that there were external forces that have directly influenced the way they have scaled. These included changes in the funding landscape, shifts in government policy, and the nature of demand in the market. Being ready to respond to these sorts of systemic changes is crucial.

What's more, driving true change often means changing the dynamics of these systems—disrupting social, economic or political relationships and structures that create and hold the problems we set out to address.

Without understanding the system an organization is working within, they are likely to find themselves unable to create lasting change. The first step to doing this is conducting a mapping exercise to better understand the dynamics and players in their space.

past partners, reported that there were external forces that have directly influenced the way they have scaled.

Sistema.bio
Celsa Calderoni

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Understanding the system
Ideal implementers and real implementers
Testing the market
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

...there was demand for lighter touch, open-source option

Springboard Collaborative

Ideal implementers and real implementers

Springboard Collaborative changed their model after initial pilot with partners

In 2018, we began working on a scale strategy with Springboard Collaborative, which coaches educators and family members in the US to help kids read by the fourth grade. In their initial scale strategy, they had replicated their intervention to new locations using two models: some branch sites, and other affiliate sites.

Their original hypothesis had been to train leaders at affiliate sites at a lower cost, with leaders becoming certified as they successfully led programming at their site. However, affiliate sites required more hands-on support from Springboard Collaborative than they had planned for. This meant that the approach did not turn out to be more affordable, as Springboard Collaborative had hoped it would.

After learning from these pilots, Springboard Collaborative created three tiers of support: Management, Coaching, and Consultations. The tiers allow school partners to choose the option that works for their community. Springboard Collaborative is also prototyping a new certification option for teachers to gain expertise in the Family-Educator Learning Accelerator (FELA) methodology that under-girds all of their programming.

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Understanding the system
Ideal implementers and real implementers
Testing the market
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

The stakeholders an organization plans to partner with—whether they are funders, government stakeholders, local community-based organizations, or large non-governmental organizations (NGOs)—may or may not be able to take on their scale model as designed. In the case of Springboard Collaborative's literacy program (see pg 14), they envisioned a particular combination of branch and affiliate sites, which in reality didn't prove workable.

The lean innovation approach from lesson one applies here too: rather than spending too much time planning before a model is validated, it's often best to identify risks and test them as quickly as possible to accelerate learning—as Springboard Collaborative did with their two hypothesized models. Keeping both the real and ideal implementer in mind can be more effective than only designing with an ideal implementer in mind.

This approach means striking a balance between opportunistic and reactive moves, and pursuing a dynamic and proactive long-term strategy.

Village Enterprise
Alissa Everett

Testing the market

Village Enterprise realized the market wasn't what they thought

Village Enterprise equips and empowers first-time entrepreneurs in Africa with resources and skills to start sustainable businesses and savings groups. Spring Impact worked with Village Enterprise in 2017, co-developing a strategy to replicate their poverty graduation model in Kenya and Uganda, through their replication arm: Village Enterprise Extend.

With guidance from Spring Impact, the Village Enterprise team clarified their goals, key elements of their model, and narrowed in on scaling their full poverty graduation intervention rather than splitting it up into multiple offerings. "Our work with Spring Impact helped move the needle on developing our strategy and materials much faster than we would have had the capacity to do on our own, and forced us to discuss and decide on details that may have otherwise been compromised in early stages of replication," said Lindsay Bouchelle, the Associate Director of Institutional Partnerships at the time.

In 2017, Village Enterprise had planned to scale their model with large, international non-governmental organizations (INGO's) paying for Village Enterprise's help. Through experience of trying to implement these plans, they learned that these relationships take a long time to build, and the broader market of INGOs is diverse, not homogenous, with different incentives, fee structures, and partnership models. Some INGOs would want to carry out an intervention themselves, while others would want to subcontract.

Despite huge success—reaching one million people—like all ambitious organizations, Village Enterprise is looking for their next level of scale, with a push to deliver their proven model at scale in a more cost-effective way.

JOURNEY TO IMPACT

Introduction

The journey so far

What we've learned

Lesson 1

Lesson 2

Lesson 3

Identifying skills and mindsets for scale

Investing in people

Lesson 4

Lesson 5

So what next?

Acknowledgements

Contact us

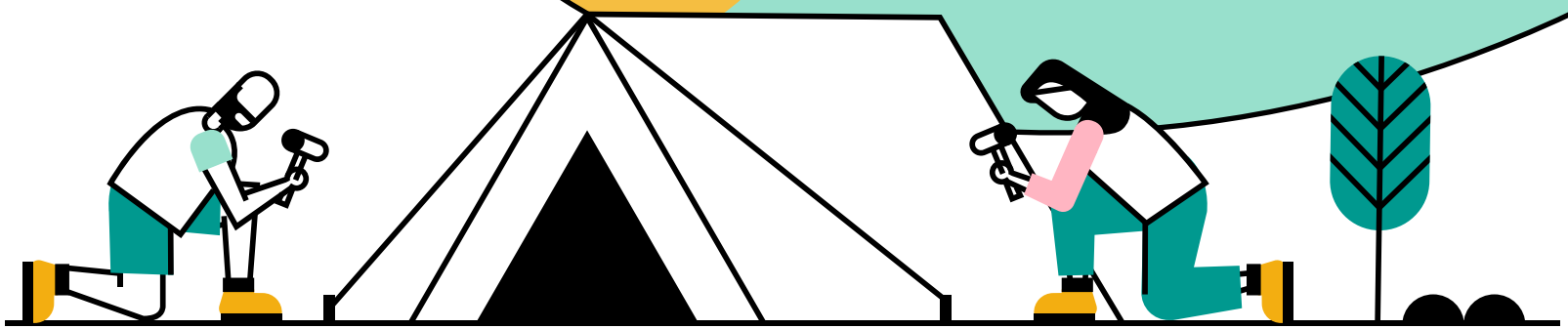
LESSON 3

Organizations don't scale things, people do

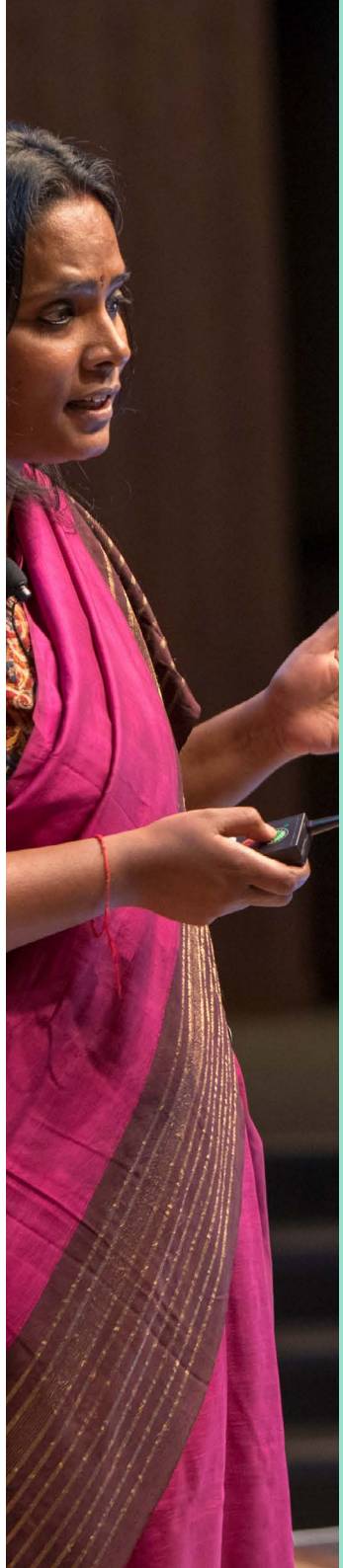
As we set out in our first two lessons, the world in which organizations work will shift and change in unexpected ways. In this lesson, we emphasize something that they do have direct control over: the people they bring in to help them respond to these changes and forge ahead on their journey.

Recruiting the right people for scale planning and execution can be one of the most important and impactful choices an organization makes. In our experience, many organizations do know this, in theory at least.

What can be difficult in practice is **identifying skills and mindsets for scale**. So, in this section, we've compiled some. And there's a lesson here for funders, too. **Investing in people**, not just specific outcomes, is important.



Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Identifying skills and mindsets for scale
Investing in people
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us



Identifying skills and mindsets for scale

When we asked our most successful partners what was behind their success, almost all of them cited people as a key factor.

Drawing on our own experience and that of our partners, we've identified the following key mindsets to be mastered to support scale, and the skills to activate them.

These tips can help define role descriptions and competencies when recruiting for senior leaders, or treat them as priorities for staff development. Funders can use the skills and mindsets we have identified as criteria to guide their analysis of potential grantees.

Listening to, learning from, and working with people across the community:

Leaders who listen—to local frontline staff, smaller partner nonprofits or community-based organizations helping with local service delivery—have more insight into what's happening on the ground, and can respond better and more efficiently. Meanwhile, partnering with community-based organizations often means they are more likely to remain passionate and committed to an innovation as a key stakeholder invested in the change being made.

Welcoming adaptability and change:

Scaling is often complex with many moving parts. Those in leadership positions need the ability to anticipate and adapt when things do not go as planned and the team falls short of its targets. The ability to change course and maintain perspective is key to sustaining team morale and momentum in the long-run.

Decision-making:

The ability to make decisions, then test those decisions, is crucial. While it can be daunting to make a big call, it's better to explore new ways to make change, learn from mistakes and adjust an approach than to perpetuate the status quo.

Creating and sustaining buy-in:

The ability to get everyone on board and keep them there, from the boardroom to the frontline, is another crucial quality. Often, this means excelling at open and honest communication, from inspiring others to see the big-picture vision, to being clear on everyone's job responsibilities and contributions.

Identifying and testing risks:

Leaders of organizations looking to scale shouldn't focus only, or even at all, on the day-to-day implementation. Instead, they should identify, experiment with, and plan for two kinds of risks: potential flaws in their assumptions about the intervention and scale model, and anticipated and unanticipated external barriers or obstacles.

The first type of risks are the unknowns or assumptions that organizations can run small experiments to learn about, and improve their intervention and scaling model based on real-world results. Additionally, a scale model and the underlying intervention can be significantly impacted by external barriers and obstacles. Organizations can't control these barriers or obstacles, but they can plan for, mitigate, and manage them if they do occur.

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Identifying skills and mindsets for scale
Investing in people
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Investing in people

Open Road Alliance moves social enterprises from impasse to impact

Open Road Alliance offers fast, flexible, and affordable funding to impact-first organizations facing discrete, unforeseen financing gaps that threaten to derail their work. By stepping in with a small investment at the right moment, Open Road Alliance keeps critical projects moving forward.

According to Open Road Alliance, one in five social impact projects encounters unexpected obstacles that can negatively impact their outcomes. From Spring Impact's experience, this number is even higher when social impact organizations are working towards scale.

In 2019, Spring Impact partnered with Open Road Alliance on their advocacy efforts to promote grantmaking practices that help keep impact on track. This includes trust-based communication, consistent identification and assessment of possible roadblocks, and resources like contingency funds to help manage when obstacles arise.

...grantmaking practices that help keep impact on track

As a funder, there's often a temptation to focus exclusively on key outcomes, metrics, or deliverables—a problem we'll return to in our fifth lesson, on funding the entire journey to scale (see pg 28).

But it's important to note that, given people are such a key success factor, funders who are looking to support an organization to scale should extend their investment to cover organizational development and leadership. A complementary challenge for funders is to support social impact leaders to practice "impact resiliency": engage early when grantees encounter roadblocks, and allow a channel for them to access the appropriate resources to overcome these hurdles.

Hope Enterprise Corporation

JOURNEY TO IMPACT

Introduction

The journey so far

What we've learned

Lesson 1

Lesson 2

Lesson 3

Lesson 4

Committing resources

Shifting mindsets

Lesson 5

So what next?

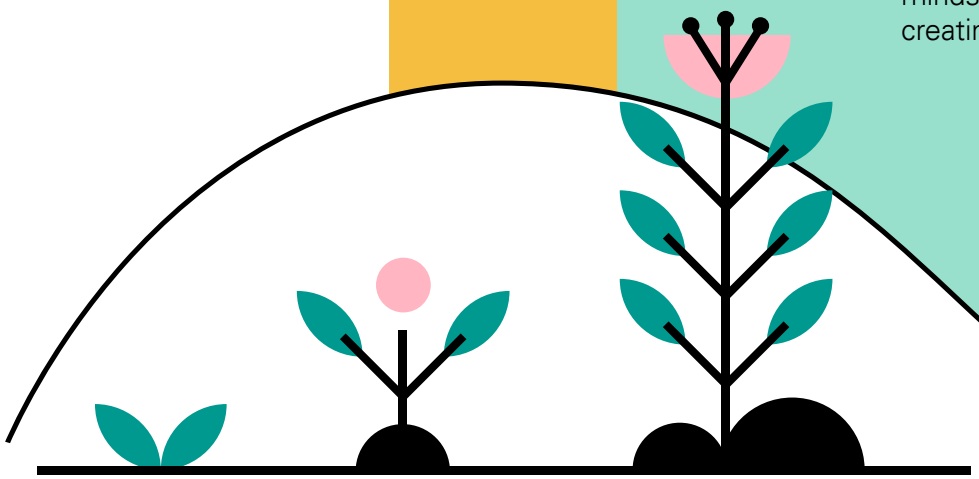
LESSON 4

Processes are beautiful, not boring

At Spring Impact, we often work with partners through our methodology for scale, which has evolved based on lessons learned over our first 10 years.

This lesson relates to an important step we call, "Systemize", during which organizations design and codify key systems and processes needed for scale. We've worked on major Systemize projects with at least 37 partners, and systemization makes an appearance in all of our work to increase the rate of successful implementation. Dedicating resources to building systems and processes for scale saves time and energy in the long-run. It's not just organizations that need to hear this, either: to those looking to fund an organization to scale, a commitment to seeing implementation through should be factored into that support.

These systems and processes aren't just about the documents that capture them. It's also about a mindset shift—a new way of working that prioritizes creating and implementing these systems.



Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Committing resources
Shifting mindsets
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Committing resources

Recovery Café: the beauty of not reinventing the wheel

The Recovery Café Network is made up of a community of individuals who have been traumatized by houselessness, addiction, and other mental health challenges. They create drug and alcohol-free community spaces that serve as refuges for healing and hope, walking alongside individuals to build community and transform lives.

Recovery Café told us that the quality management plan, training plan, operations manual, and other key documents we helped them to produce during the Systemize phase were some of the most valuable outputs from our work together.

As they put it: "(Our work with Spring Impact) allowed us to bring staff up to speed faster. Often there are times where we say, "We thought about this already, we created a document with Spring Impact. Instead of re-inventing the wheel, we've been able to go back to these documents… as we move from one topic to the next, we've been able to say we've laid the groundwork."

...we've been able to say we've laid the groundwork

Recovery Café

Documenting systems and processes can make all the difference to success at scale.

For example, our third lesson focuses on the central importance of recruiting the right people in the journey to scale. But crucial in finding the right people is having the right recruitment collateral, which is part of the systemization work we do with partners. Our first two lessons touch on the importance of piloting and learning from those pilots, but successful pilots depend on good implementation plans, drawn up as part of systemization.

In our past work with funder partners, we've seen the value of committing resources to building processes and investing in the capacity of teams to scale up their impact. When considering how to invest in its Scale X Design Accelerator participants, CARE looks for tactical outputs such as financial models, business plans, and scaling plans, to analyze feasibility for scale; they also provide mentorship to help teams build capacity where needed. Meanwhile, the Lipman Family Prize focuses on the leadership development of its honorees, providing tuition-free executive education programming at Wharton's Aresty Institute for Executive Education and the Center for Social Impact Strategy at the University of Pennsylvania. The Lipman Family Prize also coordinates capacity building projects with graduate students and UPenn partners, and in 2018-2019, partnered with Spring Impact to deliver a training series on scale topics to their honorees.

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Committing resources
Shifting mindsets
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Shifting mindsets

Marie Stopes Zambia and the Hewlett Foundation: Systems and processes supporting vision

Spring Impact was funded by The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to assist Marie Stopes Zambia (MSZ)—the local affiliate organization of MSI Reproductive Choices in Zambia — in the design, systematization, and pilot implementation of their model for adolescent sexual reproductive healthcare delivery. Most recently, our work has focused on building a long-term partnership with the Zambian government to help deliver these critical services.

They told us that one of the most useful aspects of working with Spring Impact was being able to document the best practices and the "how" of their work. And, they said, this documentation was valuable "to ensure two things: continued alignment around our vision and fidelity to the model as new providers and district and facility staff are onboarded, and longevity of commitment from government." Over time as government staff and leadership may change, MSZ will be able to rely on their documented vision, strategy, and operations to keep the vision intact, ensure clarity of roles between the government and MSZ, and promote quality operations.

...continued alignment around our vision and fidelity to the model

The documents developed during systemization matter but, as in the MSZ example (see pg 24), the mindset that leads to them is all-important. For MSZ and many other partners we have worked with, this step was crucial to helping them remember that reporting results isn't the only thing that matters. Recording how they got them is necessary too.

It's the other point that MSZ made that we think really makes systems and processes especially beautiful. An organization can have the most compelling vision imaginable, but if they don't have good ways of working in place, it will prove hard to align external and internal stakeholders around it. Without systemization, even the most dazzling dreams might not be realized.

Maria Stopes Zambia

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
Funding scale plans
Long-term, flexible funding
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

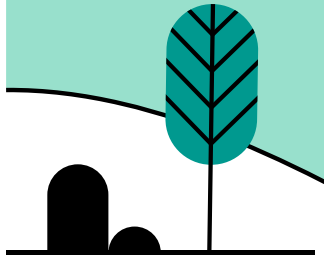
LESSON 5

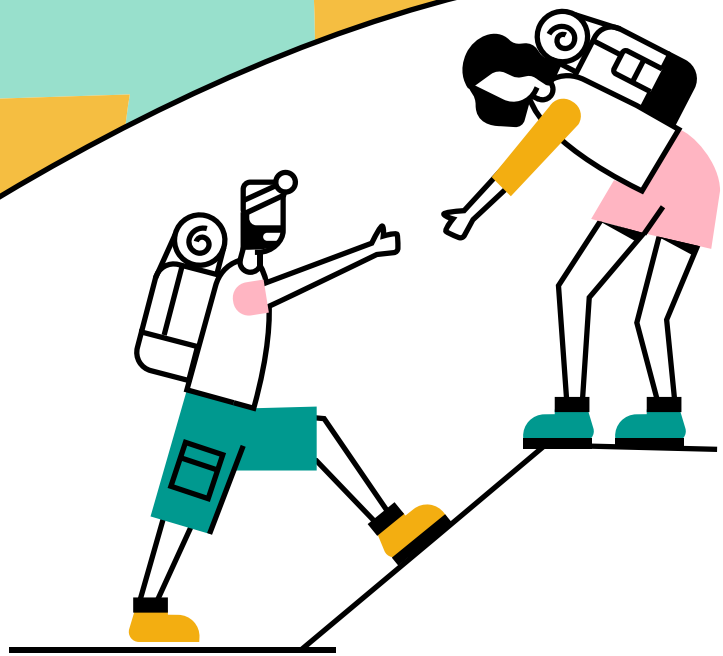
Fund the journey, not just the destination

It's difficult for our partners to secure the funds required to invest in strategic planning, operational systems, and human resources, especially when funding is tied to direct impact targets and pre-prescribed activities.

So this lesson is all about where they put their money. In short, it's not just about the outcomes and deliverables—the destination. Funders should also invest in the **entire journey** to scale, including **funding the development and piloting of scale plans**.

Ideally, funders should provide **long-term, flexible funding** for scaling, allowing organizations to implement and iterate on their plans. The greatest impact is achieved by organizations that can respond to the different dynamics of the system they're working within. Flexible funding endorses transformative leaders to do what they do best—lead through constantly changing circumstances and keep their focus on impact.





NSPCC

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
Funding scale plans
Long-term, flexible funding
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Funding scale plans

Scale Accelerator shows the value of funding planning time

Spring Impact's Scale Accelerator, funded by The National Lottery Community Fund, helps mission-driven organizations to maximize their impact on people's lives by offering £30,000 worth of consultancy from a dedicated team of experts.

This is an example of funders investing in organizations' planning time, which can then serve as a gateway to participants gaining longer-term funding elsewhere. We designed the program to include coaching around, and the co-development of, a financial model for each participant to help them in their funding efforts.

After participating in the Scale Accelerator, TLC: Talk, Listen, Change—which delivers a range of relationship interventions—have replicated their "Bridging to Change" domestic violence perpetrator program to nine new locations. They indicate a key factor in their success in securing the required funding was the new financial model they developed through the accelerator process.

Organizations have to experiment and learn what works to overcome barriers as they scale. A funder's role should be to enable organizations to engage in this learning, and prepare for sustainable impact. Part of that is funding the planning process. TLC: Talk, Listen, Change and others in our Scale Accelerator (see pg 23) have managed to scale their work and secure further funding in ways they never could have imagined without this support.

We see great potential in more funders taking the leading role and being explicit about funding scale planning. Organizations often don't know where to access funding for scale, meaning that high-potential work is often passed over in favor of less powerful ideas whose originators happen to have funder relationships. If they have the resources, funders could even consider setting up a scale-specific fund.

For example, from 2017 to 2021, we partnered with Health Foundation to scale and spread healthcare innovations across the UK National Health Service (NHS). At the outset, we conducted research into why many promising local solutions struggle to scale their outcomes to new locations effectively, and together developed the **Exploring Social Franchising** program, to apply social franchising techniques to help teams more effectively scale their innovations.

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
Funding scale plans
Long-term, flexible funding
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Through the program, Spring Impact worked closely with four selected teams working on different healthcare innovations to develop and implement a social franchise model. In 2019, all four teams were granted further funding to put their scale plans into practice.

One such intervention is the IRIS service (Identification and Referral to Improve Safety) run by social enterprise IRISi. IRIS is a program supporting primary care centers to more effectively recognize the signs of domestic violence and abuse among their patients, and refer survivors to specialist Advocate Educators. So far, IRISi has piloted their new social franchise model for replicating the service with four new sites across England and Wales. Early indicators suggest that the new model is leading to greater quality of implementation and fidelity of impact, and so IRISi will continue to roll out the social franchising approach, recruiting new sites and transitioning existing ones.

The rigorous design process of the Exploring Social Franchising program has enabled Health Foundation to understand which plans had the greatest impact potential, which organizations had real potential to scale, and which should receive significant investment to go on their scaling journey.

Maria Stopes Zambia

Long-term, flexible funding

Patient funding is critical for Marie Stopes Zambia

Marie Stopes Zambia (MSZ – see pg 21) told us that one of the most important factors in their approach to scale has been long-term, patient, flexible funding from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

This has allowed MSZ to iterate and evolve their approach over time, learning from both success and failure, to make their work sustainable. Where flexible funding is provided for innovation and iteration, even negative results yield positive lessons that ultimately have beneficial impact.

In particular, building strong partnerships with government stakeholders takes time, and as such, long-term, flexible investment from donors is critical. The fruits of this kind of partnership building are significant: since embarking on a joint venture model to deliver adolescent sexual reproductive health services with the public health sector, MSZ has reported that their government counterparts see the project as their own initiative, which MSZ is supporting.

Introduction
The journey so far
What we've learned
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
Funding scale plans
Long-term, flexible funding
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Ultimately, scaling is more like a series of steps than it is a smooth curve. Organizations experiment and learn and reach an inflection point—they might rapidly increase the number of people they reach, and their impact on those people's lives, but then plateau. Maybe policy needs changing, maybe they need to unlock a new sustainable funding source. Long-term, flexible funding allows organizations like MSZ to adapt and learn from missteps as they climb these steps.

We find that funders providing at least three years of funding gives organizations a much better shot at scaling. If organizations are constantly fire-fighting for more funding, they don't have the time and headspace to dedicate to the significant organizational change that is needed to be successful at scale.

Scaling is an unpredictable and evolving journey. Organizations might have clear long-term objectives and a vision, but they are rarely able to accurately pinpoint the impact they'll have at each stage of their journey for a funding application process. The metrics-driven approach currently used by many funders favors project-based funding, where the outcomes are predictable but the opportunity for exponential or transformational impact is significantly lower.

This is why flexibility of funds is so important, to be utilized as needs change. Savannah Miller of CARE's Scale X Design Accelerator put it this way, "A lot of times in an NGO environment there are so many restrictions with funding, while what teams really need to scale is flexible funding. This requires a mindset shift for funders."

Ultimately, scaling is more like a series of steps than it is a smooth curve.

Copyright - 2019
Susana Bates/CARE

Introduction
What we've learned
The journey so far
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
Funding scale plans
Long-term, flexible funding
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

FES

Foundation for Ecological Security builds toward systems change over time

For example, since 2015 we have partnered with the Foundation for Ecological Security (FES)—a Skoll Foundation awardee who has received $1.5 million in funding over three years—to scale their work and increase their impact in India.

By the beginning of 2018, FES had already paved the way for improved economic opportunities of 7.8 million rural people and better environmental stewardship of 7.52 million acres of land. In 2019, FES and Spring Impact partnered to systemize their scale models for rapid uptake by staff and partners, and think more holistically on their broader scale approach so that they might reach even more people in India.

FES and Spring Impact continue to build on this work to strengthen their partnerships with government institutions, to build momentum in achieving large-scale systems change at the state and national levels. Building credibility and influence through increased scale will enable FES' advocacy and policy work to unlock even more impact.

Introduction
What we've learned
The journey so far
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5

So what next?
Understand the system
Map pathways to scale
Adopt the right mindset and tools

Acknowledgements
Contact us

So what next?

Here's what we're doing with what we've learned, and how you can be a part of our journey ahead.

We hope you'll find ways to apply these lessons to your work. We're already doing so: they have helped us validate and improve the approach we take, and we've already changed a lot based on what we've learned along the way.

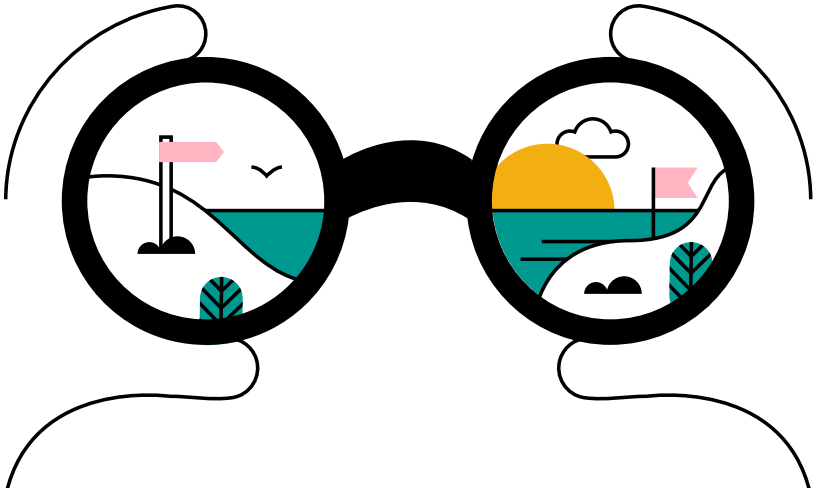
In particular, we've taken all these lessons into account when shaping our thinking on a new framework on what an organization needs for their 'journey to impact'. It looks like this:

Understand the system

Working out which interventions to pursue to maximize impact is vital, and we're bringing it deeper and deeper into everything we do. We covered the notion of systems thinking as applied to scale in our second lesson (see pg 12). To illustrate how understanding the system can change what teams do, we turn to the example of: a food bank.

Food banks are known for providing more food through increasing their volume or replicating to new locations. In other words, growing their impact through direct service. In reality, many food banks seek to understand the system they sit within, and have concluded that providing more food is just one intervention in a system that needs to change to eradicate the problem of food insecurity; there are many underlying issues that make people need the service in the first place.
This understanding can open up a set of additional solutions, such as providing supermarket vouchers, or job training support so people can access increased incomes, and even policy change. Food banks that understand their system and want to change it pursue these indirect interventions as effective routes to truly tackling the long term issue at scale.

Our partner, Alameda County Community Food Bank, serves over 75,000 people a day and yet knows that if the system that holds the problem in place does not change, then they will forever tackle symptoms rather than root causes. This is why they also work to affect policy and are innovating new ideas that may lead to long-term solutions.



JOURNEY TO IMPACT

Introduction

What we've learned

The journey so far

Lesson 1

Lesson 2

Lesson 3

Lesson 4

Lesson 5

So what next?

Understand the system

Map pathways to scale

Adopt the right mindset and tools

Acknowledgements

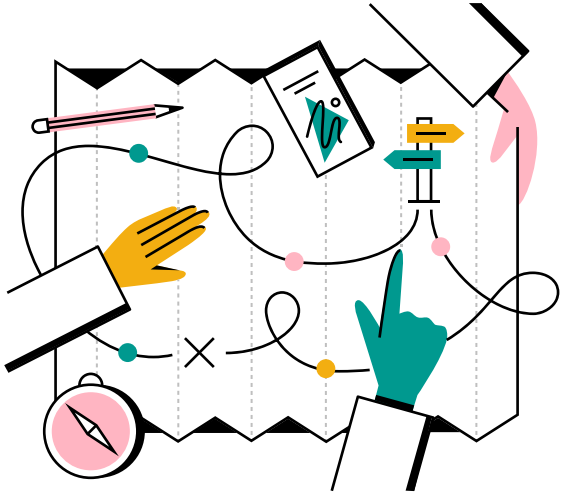
Contact us

Map pathways to scale

Once an organization has understood the system that they're operating in, identifying the highest impact pathways helps to ensure their vital resources, time and energy are most effectively invested in the right solutions. The food bank example introduces a range of potential pathways to scale from opening in more locations to partnering with supermarkets.

First, teams create a hypothesis for the mix of pathways that are most likely to solve the problem they are tackling over time. Often an organization like a food bank may start replicating but then later decide that to successfully reach their impact goal, they need to pursue other pathways. This is what happened with the Trussell Trust Foodbank which we worked with when they were working in around 40 communities in the United Kingdom, focusing on replication as their main pathway to scale. Ten years later, having reached almost complete national coverage, they realized that their key pathway to further scale is now in influencing policy that will improve the lives of their target communities.

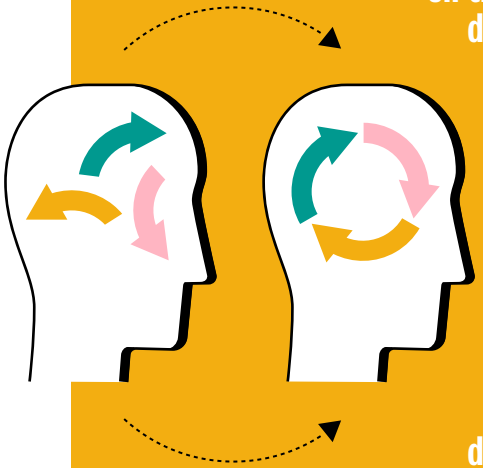
Mapping pathways to scale helps organizations understand the strategic trade-offs and keep focus on what's most likely to achieve the desired impact at scale.



Adopt the right mindset and tools

Leaders and teams that adopt a 'learning by doing' mindset are better able to respond to the dynamics of the social sector, overcoming barriers as they arise. Continuing with our food bank example, policy change is an important strategy leveraged by food banks in the US that requires constant adaptability as political will and policy agendas change. Organizations need to have the right agile mindset and tools such as a lean innovation approach to avoid fixating on one solution and keep changing, testing, and learning within the systems and structures they're operating, both large and small.

There are a range of other mindsets teams need, many of which we've covered in this report. At Spring Impact, we're focused now more than ever on ensuring teams are equipped with the mindsets and tools they need to increase their chances of success.



These three elements are what is needed on the journey to impact, and our design for scale methodology is the roadmap for how to get to scale.

At Spring Impact, we're dedicated to guiding teams on their journey to impact and helping them solve some of the world's most critical challenges. It's always an honor and an adventure to work with these mission-driven leaders. If you're part of a team looking to start or continue your journey; or a funder who wants to help organizations do the hard work along the way, please feel free to get in touch with us.

https://www.springimpact.org/contact/

Introduction
What we've learned
The journey so far
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

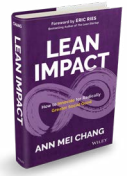
Acknowledgements

This publication represents a collaborative effort spanning several years, and was made possible by many people. Thank you to all of our partners who have contributed by sharing their lessons learned on their own journeys to scale. A special thank you to our partners that are featured in this report and acknowledged on this page.

We are grateful to the many Spring Impact colleagues, advisors, and board members, past and present, for contributing to this report through their work, particularly to Raili Marks, whose contribution to Spring Impact's methodology over the past five years has been invaluable.

Lastly, we wanted to acknowledge those that have worked most closely on this publication:

Marina Kaneko, Spring Impact
Alice Metcalf, Spring Impact
Nora Dettor, Spring Impact
Ingrid Horton, Community Works
Steve Fisher, Community Works
Sarah Gill, Our Friends in the North
Josh Lowe, Freelance writer



Introduction
What we've learned
The journey so far
Lesson 1
Lesson 2
Lesson 3
Lesson 4
Lesson 5
So what next?
Acknowledgements
Contact us

Contact us

Stay up to date

- Follow us on Twitter
- Follow us on LinkedIn
- Subscribe to our newsletter
- Email us
- Visit our website