Insights from the Edmonton Recover Initiative
Evaluation Brief #1 from May 2019

Evaluating "Innovations" in Social Innovation Labs

From Probes to Scaling

RECOVER is a City of Edmonton-led project that is working to address the complex challenge of urban wellness. The project began in 2017, in response to concerns of residents in the downtown core neighbourhoods about the cumulative impacts of existing and emerging social services in Edmonton's downtown core neighbourhoods. RECOVER has adopted a Social Innovation Lab process for its work.

Social innovation labs (SILs) are spaces for diverse participants (aka social innovators) to surface, develop, test and – if appropriate – sustain and scale solutions to stubborn economic, social, and environmental challenges.

The sponsors and facilitators of such Labs have developed inventive ways to help would-be change makers develop deeper insight and empathy into the nature of urban life, to uncover creative ideas for improving communities, and to experiment with these ideas.

However, they are often less clear about how to evaluate their promising solutions at each stage of the innovation process, from the many rapid prototypes in the early days of the innovation to the much more grinding effort required to scale proven experiments.

This brief lays out a framework to evaluate initiatives emerging from a typical innovation process. It is organized around a continuum that tracks the evolution of an innovation through five typical phases.

The framework is not meant to be comprehensive. Rather, it introduces and illustrates the different tasks for evaluators at each phase of the innovation process. Like all frameworks, people managing a change process must adapt it to suit their unique context.

It is important to understand that the innovation continuum represents an idealized approach to the evolution of an innovative idea from Lab initiatives. The final section of this resource explores several ways that an actual innovation process looks in practice – and the implications for evaluation.

It is also important to note that the insights presented in this brief are from a moment in time in RECOVER's overall journey. Additional insights and lessons will emerge over time.

RECOVER

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How to Use this Brief

If you are Lab facilitator:

- A deeper understanding of the stages of innovation can help you (a) better design each phase of the Lab, and (b) explain the purpose and approach to Lab participants, partners, and funders.

While developing inventive ways to help would-be changemakers ... Lab sponsors and facilitators are often less clear about how to evaluate promising solutions at each stage of the innovation process.

If you are an evaluator:

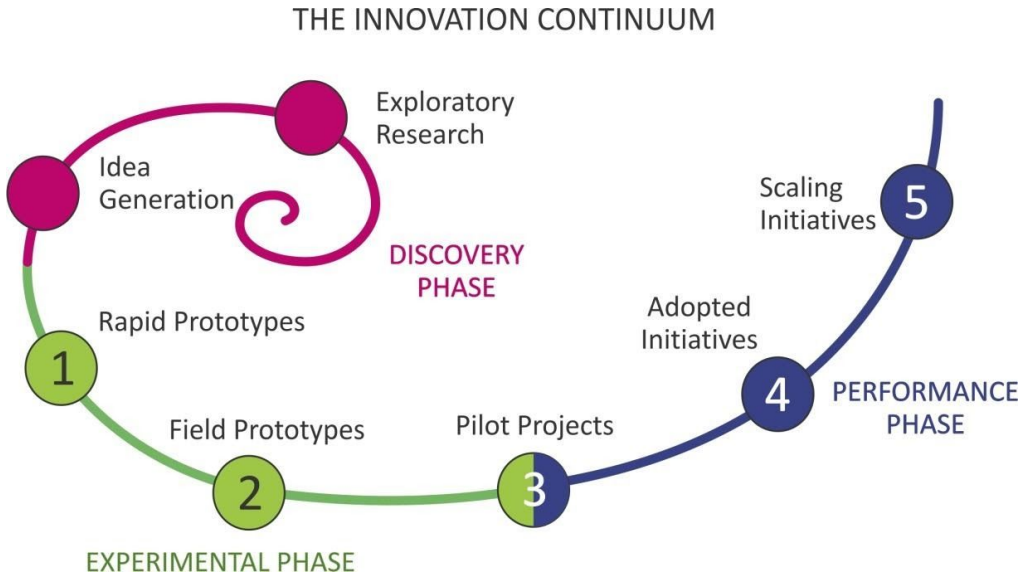
- Knowing the phases of different innovations can help you make your evaluation questions, methods, and approach more useful for Lab facilitators and participants in each part of the innovation process.

If you are a funder or partner:

- Understanding where a group is on the continuum can help you (a) establish appropriate expectations about the types of learning and results to be expected at each stage of the innovation process and (b) find ways to contribute to useful innovation processes and evaluation.

The Innovation & Evaluation Continuum

The continuum is organized around an adapted version of a NESTA diagram of the stages through which a Lab initiative typically evolves, after participants have completed a Discovery Phase of research and idea generation. This includes an Experimental Phase, in which Lab participants develop and test new ideas, and a Performance Phase, in which they adopt, sustain, and – if appropriate – scale the most successful experiments.



The following description of each of the five stages includes a summary of its purpose in the innovation process, illustrative evaluation questions and methods, as well as key factors that affect the usefulness of the assessment process.

	Innovators Focus	Emphasis	Evaluation Focus
Rapid Prototypes	Developing and getting reactions to early and rough representations of an innovative idea.	**Learning**	▪ Facilitate initial reactions of stakeholders to the idea. ▪ Assist innovators to determine whether to adapt, continue to test, or wind-down the idea.
Field Prototypes	Developing and testing "working elements" of an innovative idea in field conditions.	**Learning**	▪ Facilitate feedback to the idea. ▪ Assist innovators to determine whether to adapt, continue to test, or wind-down the idea.
Pilot Projects	Managing a longer term, systematic test of a functional application of an idea to determine if it is sufficiently impactful to warrant adoption.	**Learning & Impact**	▪ Provide real-time feedback to improve pilot and get a handle on impact. ▪ Assist innovators to determine whether to sustain, discontinue, or scale the innovation.
Sustained Initiatives	Stewarding a process to sustaining and adapting an innovation and regularly monitoring its results.	**Impact & Learning**	▪ Provide real-time feedback on efforts to sustain and adapt a proven innovation. ▪ Assist innovators to track impact over time.
Scaling Initiatives	Stewarding the deliberate expansion of a successful innovation: making it larger; replicating it at new sites; pushing for culture and systems change.	**Impact & Learning**	▪ Provide real-time feedback on efforts to scale a proven innovation up, out, and deep. ▪ Assist innovators to track impact over time.

Where Innovative Ideas Come From

Where do the ideas for innovation come from? It depends. The stewards and sponsors of social innovation Labs across the country employ a rich mix of exploratory techniques to better understand social, economic, and environmental challenges. They then draw on these insights to surface new ideas about how to address the challenges.

Participants of Recover Edmonton have developed – and continue to adapt – a made-in-Edmonton 3-step process to create the foundations for improving urban wellness in six historic neighbourhoods. These are:

Participants of Recover Edmonton have developed – and continue to adapt – a productive, 3-step process to create the foundations for improving urban wellness in six historic neighbourhoods.

1. Carry out a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to clarify the context for urban wellness in each neighbourhood.
   - Public Engagement – use interviews and focus groups to connect with hundreds of residents and get their perspectives and opinions on the wellness of the community.
   - GIS Mapping – pull together traditional data, such as socio-economic measures, neighbourhood vulnerability indices, census data, and program statistics to get a bird's eye view of urban wellness.
   - Ethnographic Research – carry out in-person research with people experiencing barriers to wellness to get deeper insight and empathy into their needs, challenges, and opportunities.
   - Strategy Mapping – identify, understand, and map connections between the many other strategies, policies, programs, and services related to urban wellness in Edmonton neighbourhoods, and how they might better complement each other.
2. Prepare a summary of the research findings, including descriptions of (a) "opportunity areas" for innovation; (b) promising ideas organized around "how might we" and "What if" questions; (c) the types of people living in the area; (d) possible partnerships; and (e) "points of pain and delight," as well as "insights" to keep in mind when developing possible solutions.
3. Facilitate a series of co-creation sessions at which small teams of residents and organizational staff identify and develop the ideas they would like to test through prototyping. This then kick-starts the Experimental Phase.

The systematic process employed by Recover Edmonton is productive. In the second cycle of innovation, the participants of the co-design sessions in May and June 2019 will be able to draw on dozens of innovative ideas to improve neighbourhoods' urban wellness in nine opportunity areas.

Rapid Prototypes

Rapid prototypes are low-fidelity representations of ideas, models, or solutions. The typical ways to create them are through sketches, simulations, Lego installations, role-playing, story boards, or short video clips. The value in rapid prototypes is that they encourage people to make their abstract ideas tangible as well as offer something to which intended users of the innovation can provide feedback.

Innovators usually produce rapid prototypes during a “co-creation” session. Having gained more insight into the challenge they are trying to address, participants together generate some preliminary ideas on creative ways to solve their key problem or to make progress towards their vision. In some cases, teams take their prototype beyond the workshop settings in which they were created and present them to stakeholders.

The central job of evaluation in this phase is to assist prototype creators to gather feedback from “issue stakeholders” (particularly those meant to use or benefit from the idea) and make sense of their reactions. What do they like about the idea and why? What do they like not as much? Why? How might the idea be improved? This open-ended feedback can then be used to answer questions about the likely merit of the idea in terms of its impact, feasibility, viability, and support among stakeholders.

Prototype teams can then use this feedback to make one of the following decisions:

- Continue – further develop and test the idea with different stakeholders.
- Pivot – adapt the original idea in some way, and continue testing with stakeholders.
- Exit – drop the idea behind the idea behind the prototype entirely.

The methods typically employed to get stakeholder feedback on prototypes include traditional focus groups, appreciative inquiry sessions, peer input sessions, and ritual dissent sessions. In all cases, the feedback to rapid prototypes is qualitative – the opinions of innovation users or stakeholders. Nevertheless, that feedback can be turned into quantitative data by asking people to rate the strength of their opinions on different aspects of the prototype.

The following are key to making evaluation useful at this stage:

- the extent to which the prototypes offer some insight into the idea that the group is proposing.
- a strength-based approach to inquiry and feedback.
- the relevance and diversity of stakeholders providing feedback, including intended users.
- Real-time feedback.
- facilitated time for sense-making, decision-making. and planning post feedback.

One of the trickiest things in evaluating rapid prototypes is to find time in fast-moving group processes (a) to create space for the prototype team to make sense of the data; (b) to draw conclusions about its potential impact (as well as its feasibility and viability); (c) to make a decision on how to proceed; and (d) confirm next steps.

Table: Rapid Prototypes

Typical Questions	Illustrative Methods	Factors Affecting Quality & Use
1. To what extent is the idea likely to generate an **impact**? 2. To what extent is the idea likely to be **feasible** to implement? 3. To what extent is the idea likely to be **viable** in our community? 4. To what extent is the idea likely to **align** (i.e. be "complementary," "duplicative," or "counterproductive") with existing initiatives, strategies, and policies? 5. To what extent is the idea likely to be **supported** by key stakeholders?	· One-on-one user interviews · Focus groups organized around open-ended questions, such as: "I like …", "I wish …", "I like …" , "Have you thought about …" · Peer Input Session · Ritual Dissent	· The extent to which the rapid prototype offers a good representation of the innovative idea · Number of feedback sessions · Diversity of people providing feedback, including intended users · A strength-based approach to inquiry · A spirit of free discussion and feedback · Facilitated discussions

Field Prototypes

Field prototypes (aka live prototypes) are more fulsome expressions of an innovative idea. They sometimes emerge when several iterations of rapid prototyping give rise to ideas that innovators feel are compelling enough to test more fully.

Rapid prototypes are most often developed and discussed by people around a table. By contrast, field prototypes are "working models," "minimum viable products," or "high-fidelity designs" that are functional enough to allow users to test them in real-life settings. For instance:

Unlike rapid prototypes, field prototypes are "working models," "minimum viable products," or "high-fidelity designs" that are functional enough to allow users to test them in real-life settings.

- A group with ideas of how to make employment services more friendly using one-stop services may create a full-fledged simulation of that service, with different stakeholders (e.g. clients, employment counselors, employers, administrators) and evaluators tracking the experience and feedback from each group at each stage.
- Urban planners often create a mock-up of a pedestrian-friendly sidewalk to see how people actually walk on it, or the extent to which it affects local traffic.

Field prototypes can be designed to test (a) one feature of an idea (e.g., How can we make this application form easier to fill out?); (b) multiple features (e.g., What is the overall user experience in this new way of applying for employment services? How quickly do we hear back?); or (c) all elements of the model (e.g., Let's walk through the entire application process, step by step).

Whereas the purpose and questions for evaluating field prototypes are the same as for rapid prototypes, the evaluation design is much more targeted. Rather than facilitate a process of gathering open-ended feedback from a wide range of users, evaluators must create evaluation designs that are customized to the unique nature of each prototype, address the innovators' specific questions, and ensure that the intended users are the primary source of evaluation feedback.

The following factors are key to making evaluation of field prototypes useful:

- the extent to which the prototype is sufficiently developed so users can experience, interact with, and provide feedback on it.
- the clarity of evaluation questions to be answered.
- the diversity of the feedback, especially from those meant to benefit most from the experience.
- the facilitation of structured sense-making to review the feedback and decision-making processes and then determine where to go next.

- the flexibility of the evaluation design.

In instances in which Innovators are likely to develop several iterations of field prototypes, the evaluation design will need to be continually adapted to reflect the evolution of the prototypes and the innovators' questions.

Table: Field Prototypes

Illustrative Questions	Illustrative Methods	Factors Affecting Quality & Use
1. To what extent is the idea like to generate an **impact**?	• Participant Observation • Expert Interviews • Focus Groups • After Action Reviews • Emergent Learning Tables • Rapid stakeholder feedback • Evaluation Rubrics	• Quality of field prototype • Clarity of which element of the prototype is being tested and the evaluation questions to be addressed • The feedback of the intended users (e.g., beneficiaries, stakeholders, etc.) • The relevance of evaluation methods • Number of feedback sessions • Strong facilitation throughout the process
2. To what extent is the idea likely to be **feasible** to implement?		
3. To what extent is the idea likely to be **viable** in our community?		
4. To what extent is the idea likely to **align** (i.e. be "complementary," "duplicative," or "counterproductive") with existing initiatives, strategies, and policies?		
5. To what extent is the idea likely to be **supported** by key stakeholders ?		

Pilot Projects

Pilot projects are more elaborate expressions of the innovative ideas that may emerge from rapid prototypes. Rapid prototypes are most often developed and discussed around a table; field prototypes test innovative ideas in "field conditions." Pilot projects are "high

stakes" experiments. Their primary purpose is to enable innovators and evaluators to assemble enough evidence so that innovators and their supporters can assess the merit or worth of an innovative idea, and determine whether this "working model" should be sustained, discontinued, or scaled up.

Typically, pilot projects unfold through three stages, each with its own evaluation focus and questions.

- Developmental – creating and adapting the different elements of an innovation through a process of trial and error.
- Formative – a time to stabilize, improve and refine the model.
- Summative – the longer-term tracking of outcomes, leading to a decision as to whether the innovation should be sustained, discontinued, or scaled.

In their design and evaluation, pilot projects are as diverse as the innovative ideas they are meant to assess and the contexts in which they operate. A pilot project to test the merit of a Basic Income Program in a neighbourhood will differ wildly from a test of a Culture Learning Pass (i.e., a program that enables inner-city residents to occupy vacant seats at symphonies, theatres, and art galleries). There is no recipe-like way to evaluate pilot projects.

It is critical that evaluations provide innovators with quality feedback in the developmental and formative stages. Ultimately, the success of the design depends on its capacity to provide evaluative data that can help innovators, funders, and partners judge the merit of the innovation and decide its future.

It is critical that evaluations provide innovators with quality feedback in the developmental and formative stages. Ultimately, the success of the design depends on its capacity to provide evaluative data that can help innovators, funders, and partners judge the merit of the innovation and decide its future. This means innovation stakeholders must ensure that the following conditions are in place:

- Sufficient time to track the kinds of outcomes that the innovation is intended to produce.
- Clear evaluation questions and criteria of "success."
- An evaluation design that generates robust and credible evidence in the eyes of decision-makers.
- Perceived credibility and objectivity of the evaluator.
- Identification of the "real moments" when summative decisions are made – which often occur well before the end of the formal pilot.
- The facilitation of a good sense-making and decision-making processes.
- Sufficient resources to make the above possible.

As important as it is to put together as solid an evaluation design as possible, innovation stakeholders should keep in mind that while evaluation data and evidence can inform decision-makers in their deliberations about an innovation's future, there remain multiple

factors to consider, among them availability of resources, organizational priorities, and broader support for the innovation.

Table: Pilot Projects

Stage	Questions	Illustrative Methods	Factors Affecting Quality & Use
Developmental Creating the intervention	▪ What parts of the intervention seem to work best? ▪ What new ideas are emerging? ▪ What kind of outcomes are possible? ▪ What is enabling and undermining the intervention?	▪ After Action Reviews ▪ Emergent Learning Tables ▪ Rapid stakeholder feedback ▪ Pre-Mortems	▪ Openness to feedback ▪ Tolerance for ambiguity and uncertainty ▪ Balancing quality and speed of feedback ▪ Nimble and flexible ▪ Synthesize multiple and sometimes conflicting data sources
Formative Improving the Intervention	▪ What is working well and not? Why? ▪ How are people reacting to the intervention? ▪ How can outcomes be increased? Costs reduced? Quality enhanced?	▪ Appreciative Inquiry ▪ Reflective Practice ▪ Continuous Improvement or Quality Enhancement ▪ Participant feedback ▪ Failure Reports	▪ Creating a learning climate ▪ Openness to feedback ▪ Evaluator skills in facilitating learning ▪ Relevance of findings and the extent to which they are actionable
Summative Judging the overall value of the intervention;	▪ Does the intervention achieve its intended outcomes?	▪ Impact Assessment ▪ Cost-Benefit or Value for Money Analysis ▪ Standardized Tests	▪ Independence and credibility of the evaluator

determining its future	▪ To what extent has the program contributed to these outcomes? ▪ To what extent does the intervention have merit or worth? ▪ Is it good value-for-money? ▪ Should the program be discontinued, sustained and/or scaled?	▪ Accreditation ▪ Longitudinal Outcomes Evaluation	▪ Rigour of the design: validity, generalizability ▪ Significance of findings to decision-makers ▪ Timeliness

Adopted Innovations

A select number of innovative ideas that make it out of the Experimental Phase will be so effective that one or more organizations or networks are ready to "adopt' them." It is at the innovation process where initiatives can be expected to generate a result (such as improved well-being for people in historic Edmonton neighbourhoods) over time.

As a general rule, adopting small-scale, simple, incremental innovations requires less effort than adopting large scale, transformational, complex ones. Adopting truly transformational innovations may require an extraordinary effort.

Innovation "adopters" are typically concerned with three tasks:

- mobilizing the financial, social, and political support to **sustain** the initiative.
- **adapting** the intervention to reflect the adopters' organization and operating context.
- managing for, tracking, and reporting on the intervention's ongoing **impact**.

As a general rule, adopting small-scale, simple, incremental innovations requires less effort than adopting large scale, transformational, complex ones. For example, a library or shelter may find it relatively easy to begin distributing sleep monitors to their nap-prone patrons so that they can be alerted to medically serious incidents of diabetic coma or overdose. By contrast, the effort to formally launch and sustain an incubator for the creation of social enterprise will be more demanding.

Adopting truly transformational innovations may require an extraordinary effort. The NESTA Foundation makes a distinction between "fast innovations" that can be adopted by organizations or systems without any change to the way they do business. "Slow

innovations," on the other hand, require the adopting organizations to make changes to their operations, skills, policies, structures, and cultures. Even the increased use of system navigators, whose job it is to ensure that persons with multiple barriers to wellness effectively connect with – and get the best support from – diverse service providers may require service agencies and their funders to make subtle yet important adjustments to how they go about their day-to-day work.

The evaluation of initiatives in the adoption phase always requires a patchwork of evaluation activities, each cluster focused on helping with a different task. This requires decision-makers and evaluators to properly scope out who the primary users of the evaluation are (e.g., funders, administrators, executives), the questions they would like answered, what would make the evaluation process and findings most credible to them, and when they need to the evaluation feedback to make decisions. It is important for a group to have a skilled evaluator or evaluation team to scope out the assessment at this stage.

More often than not, evaluating adoption processes are very intense in the early days when the adopting organization or network needs feedback on its mobilization and adaptation activities. Then it becomes more stable and less effortful, as, over time, the emphasis shifts more to the routine monitoring and reporting of outcomes of the now mainstreamed innovation.

Table: Adopted Innovations

	Questions	Illustrative Methods	Factors Affecting Quality & Use
Sustain	· To what extent are we able to mobilize the financial, political and technical resources required to "mainstream" the innovation in our organization or network?	· Cost-Benefit or Value for Money Analysis · Systems Mapping · Program Evaluation & Review Technique	· Clarity of questions, users, and uses of evaluation feedback · Skill of the evaluator scoping the work · Real time feedback · Willingness to embrace experimental approach to adapting the original innovation · Technical and financial capacity of the organization to

Adapt	• What parts of the intervention must be adapted to reflect the operating context of the "adopting" organization(s)? • What new capacities, cultures, and structures or processes does the adopting organization require to make the innovation work? • To what extent do we have fidelity to the intent, principles, and minimum practices of the original innovation?	• Developmental Evaluation • Rapid Assessment • Continuous Improvement, Quality Enhancement, Six Sigma • Capacity Building Evaluation	manage evaluation and use data • Credibility of outcome indicators • Consistency in reporting
Impact	• What are the effects, results and impacts of our work over time? • How satisfied are the users or beneficiaries of the new practice, model, or service? • How can our impact be increased? Costs reduced? Expanded to touch more people?	• Results-Based Management • Routine Monitoring & Reporting • Using evidence from prior studies and evaluation • Data Dashboards & Key Performance Indicators	

Scaling Innovations

A handful of the innovative ideas that emerge from a social innovation process will be so effective that they deserve to be scaled for broader impact.

There is no obvious finish line when scaling an innovation. Advocates can be engaged in scaling efforts for years or even decades.

To achieve this, the advocates of a social innovation must create the conditions for the broader adoption of the innovation in five distinct, but overlapping, areas:

- Scaling Out – the expansion of an innovation and/or its replication and adaptation in different contexts, resulting in wider impact.
- Scaling Up – changing policies and regulations, structures and regulations, relationships and resource flows to support the innovation.
- Scaling Deep – capturing the hearts-and-minds of athe people who need to support the innovation.

- Scaling Scree – encouraging, legitimizing, and supporting other innovations that complement the original innovation.
- Scaling Infrastructure – improving the capacity of a community or system to steward and drive the scaling process.

Managing a scaling process in all five dimensions is a complex process. Innovation stakeholders must work with multiple overlapping strategies in dynamic environments. This obliges them to develop and adapt their approach continuously in response to new learnings, shifts in context, and the emergence of new goals.

The task of evaluation is equally complex. Evaluators must be able to (a) continue to track the impact of the expanding innovation and (b) monitor progress and learnings in regard to creating the conditions for scaling: What is working? What is not? What implications do these learnings hold for adapting the scaling strategy?

Over time, leadership can often become quite distributed – even fragmented – as different organizations assume leadership of different aspects of the effort.

The ability of evaluators to do this is influenced by the following:

- An evaluation design that matches the comprehensiveness of the scaling strategy.
- The capacity to develop and manage multiple, sometimes overlapping, evaluation activities.
- Evaluators with a large "methodology toolkit" and excellent project management skills.
- Structured processes for making sense of multiple, often ambiguous and conflicting, sources of data.
- Sufficient financial resources to support the aforementioned process.
- Flexible and adaptive design.

Unlike early experimentation, there is no obvious finish line when scaling an innovation. Advocates can be engaged in scaling efforts for years or even decades (e.g., the expansion of micro-lending model). Over time, leadership can often become quite distributed – even fragmented – as different organizations assume leadership of different aspects of the effort. Evaluators will need to adjust their evaluation questions and design accordingly.

Table: Scaling Innovations

Dimension	Questions	Illustrative Methods	Factors Affecting Quality & Use

Scale Out	· Which parts of the innovation are context sensitive and not easily replicated? Which parts need to be adapted? · How far has the innovation spread? · What is the ongoing impact of the innovation? Is it growing?	· After Action Reviews · Emerging Learning Tables · Rapid stakeholder feedback · Pre-Mortems	· Ability to design and manage complex evaluation designs · The use of mixed methods · Adequate resources · Flexibility and ongoing adaptations · Complexity-aware mindset of innovators and supporters
Scale Up	· What is working well and not? Why? · How are people reacting to the intervention? · How can outcomes be increased? Costs reduced? Quality enhanced?	· Advocacy Evaluation · Outcome Mapping · Most Significant Instance of Policy and System Improvement	
Scale Deep	· To what extent are key stakeholders (e.g., the public, societal influencers, decision-makers) embracing the beliefs, narratives, and values required for the innovation to thrive?	· Bellwether Evaluation · Survey & Polling · Critical Incident Analysis	
Scale Scree	· What additional ideas, discussions, and experiments have been triggered by the original innovation? · To what extent do these innovations complement – or weaken or detract – from the original innovation?	· Key informant interviews · Case studies · Outcome Harvesting · Ripple Effect Mapping	
Scale Infrastructure	· What resources, skills, networks, and knowledge are required to spread the innovation? · How much progress are we making in the creation of	· Case Studies · Community Outcomes Reporting Techniques · Sector Scan	

	this infrastructure? How can it be improved?		

Things To Keep In Mind

This continuum offers an idealized version of how the innovation and evaluation process might unfold in Lab settings. In practice, the journey of an innovation is a much messier affair, filled with twists and turns and implementation challenges. Here are four key insights for innovators and evaluators to keep in mind as they navigate the journey.

1. **Most novel ideas don't make it to implementation**. Hewlett Packard Company takes into consideration 300 ideas for each one that gets to market and generates a profit. Sara Shulman, veteran social innovator and co-founder of the human-centered organization In With Forward, reports that over 20 prototypes must be tested to find one that is "workable."

Social innovators must have the discipline to let go of promising ideas the moment they are found to be insufficiently impactful, feasible, or viable. Innovators need to release that creative energy and apply it to developing other innovations.

2. **Experimental initiatives are meant to generate learnings not impact**. The purpose of prototypes is to test promising ideas on a small scale, to get a sense of their potential impact, as well as how they might be improved. While pilot projects seek to generate results, in the main they are learning-oriented experiments that may or may not have a concrete impact. It is not until initiatives hit the adoption or scaling phases that they can be expected to generate real and sustained impact.

Social innovators – and those that support them – must have appropriate expectations of what to expect in each phase, and not "over-promise" the results that can be achieved [and focus their evaluation resources].

3. **Innovations may skip phases. Innovations don't always unfold along the continuum, step by step**. Countless people, organizations, and networks have encountered an idea in the Discovery Phase that was so compelling, they adopted and/or scaled it without any experimentation whatsoever.

The case for and against placing such "big bets" on innovative ideas is obvious. It certainly accelerates the process of implementation and may well lead to "quick impacts." It also is risky. Stakeholders don't have data to illustrate how effective it might be, nor time to improve the ideas through smaller experiments. Social innovators and

Innovators often need to hand off their ideas to new people and organizations who have the mandate, resources, and commitment to take ideas to the next phase.

evaluators should know the pros and cons of this kind of decision.

4. **Many social innovators are unable to steward an innovation across the entire continuum**. An innovation only moves forward if a small team of people are sufficiently committed to invest the time, energy, and credibility required to take it from an idea to adoption. Some are able to see it through from beginning to end. More often than not, team members come and go, usually when the innovation is moving from one phase to the next. The team that finishes the process looks very different than the one that started it.

Innovators often need to hand off their ideas to new people and organizations who have the mandate, resources, and commitment to take ideas to the next phase, and different notions as to where to take the innovation and how. Evaluators need to adapt – and sometimes even reboot – their evaluation design and process with each evolution in leadership.

Conclusion

Understanding the different types of experiments and initiatives can help organizations be clearer about the type of results to expect in each phase, and the implications for designing and managing an evaluation.

The innovation and evaluation continuum provides a range of ideas about how social innovators can evaluate their innovations as they evolve over time. Your innovation may not proceed precisely through this path, you may use different names, and employ different techniques. Regardless, understanding the different types of experiments and initiatives can help organizations be clearer about the type of results to expect in each phase, and the implications for designing and managing an evaluation.

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