ENDING POVERTY
DEEPENING COMMUNITY
BUILDING YOUTH FUTURES
CLIMATE TRANSITIONS
Vibrant Communities
TAMARACK INSTITUTE

WORKBOOK | GETTING TO IMPACT: NICHE INNOVATIONS

ESTIMATED TIME: 3-7 HOURS

This workbook will provide a framework and some principles to help you connect the results of your niche innovations to broader outcomes for targeted populations living in or at-risk of poverty.

OVERVIEW

Developing or adapting niche innovations – programs, projects, and services - provides relatively immediate and tangible benefits for people experiencing – or at risk of experiencing – poverty. These interventions are often the focus of city-wide poverty reduction efforts.

> ***Developing new programs, projects and services provides relatively immediate and tangible benefits for people experiencing – or at risk of -- experiencing poverty.***

Moving beyond reporting on niche innovation activities and inputs, to reporting on outcomes and impact is important because it can:

- Build will, knowledge and capacity amongst funders/donors, volunteers and other stakeholders;
- Inspire and engage less-engaged or peripherally engaged stakeholders;
- Foster continuous learning and adaptation and improve strategy design;
- Focus team members on working to achieve the *vision*; and,
- Allow more influence on the narrative and how the collaborative is perceived.

Unfortunately, due to the diversity of innovations and beneficiaries that exist amongst poverty reduction collaboratives, common sets of indicators and methods to track and report on outcomes and impact do not exist.

This module will help collaboratives determine how to track and report on niche innovation outcomes and impact by helping them tackle four primary challenges that all organizers are faced with:

1. **Line-of-Sight** – How do our interventions lead from activities to outcomes to impact?
2. **Measurement** – How do we select indicators and methods of measuring outcomes and impact?
3. **Level of Influence and Capacity** – What strategies can we employ to gather, analyze and communicate programmatic outcomes?
4. **Scaling** – How do we capture the ripple effect impacts that result from scaling our initiative?

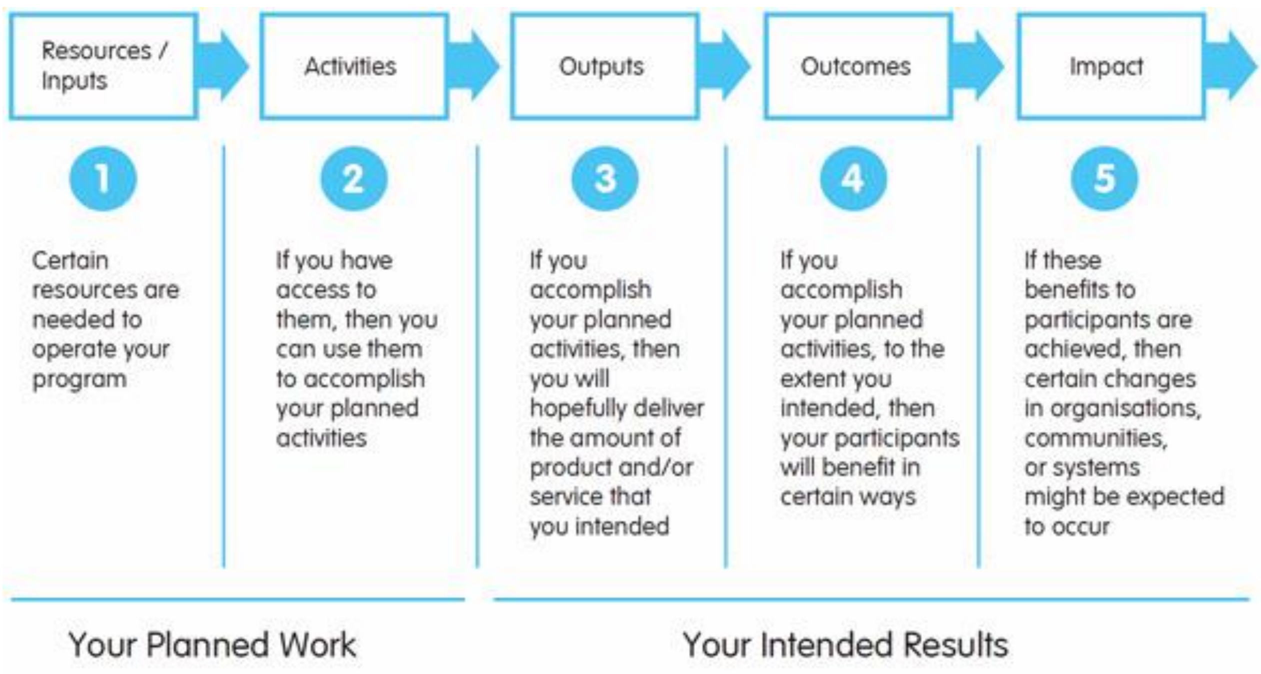
THE LINE-OF-SIGHT CHALLENGE

Challenge: Ideally, we would create a straight line-of-sight between our (program, service, or project) outcomes and poverty reduction impacts.

Our solution: Local collaboratives should employ a results framework – a logic model or theory of change – to demonstrate how niche innovations and their outcomes lead to reductions in poverty.

Logic Models

A logic model is an explicit description and depiction of how an initiative works. Focusing on the relationship between inputs and results is the roadmap or the "steps" required to achieve your goal(s). In our case, it should show how your niche initiative's activities lead to your desired poverty reduction outcomes and impact on poverty.



Theory of Change

A theory of change works backwards from the desired long-term goal, to fill in the "missing middle" and illustrate how and why that change will occur based on the program/niche initiative activities. It also articulates pre-conditions, propositions and assumptions that the work is testing.

Resources on creating a Theory of Change:

- [Planning an Evaluation and Developing a Theory of Change], Tamarack Institute
- [Developing a Theory of Change – is there a right way?] Clear Horizon

GROUP EXERCISE #1

Purpose: *Explicitly delineate how your program, service and/or project intervention inputs and activities align with your overall Theory of Change (Module 1) and will lead to outcomes and impact on poverty.*

Exercise: Copy, adapt, and complete the Figure 1 Logic Model on the next page for as many of your niche innovations as possible, then reflect with your partners on the questions below.

1. To what extent do you and your partners employ logic models or theories of change to develop a line-of-sight between program, project or service activities, outcomes and population-level impact on poverty?

2. What actions might you take to improve your local collaborative's ability to encourage and work with local partners to develop a line-of-sight?

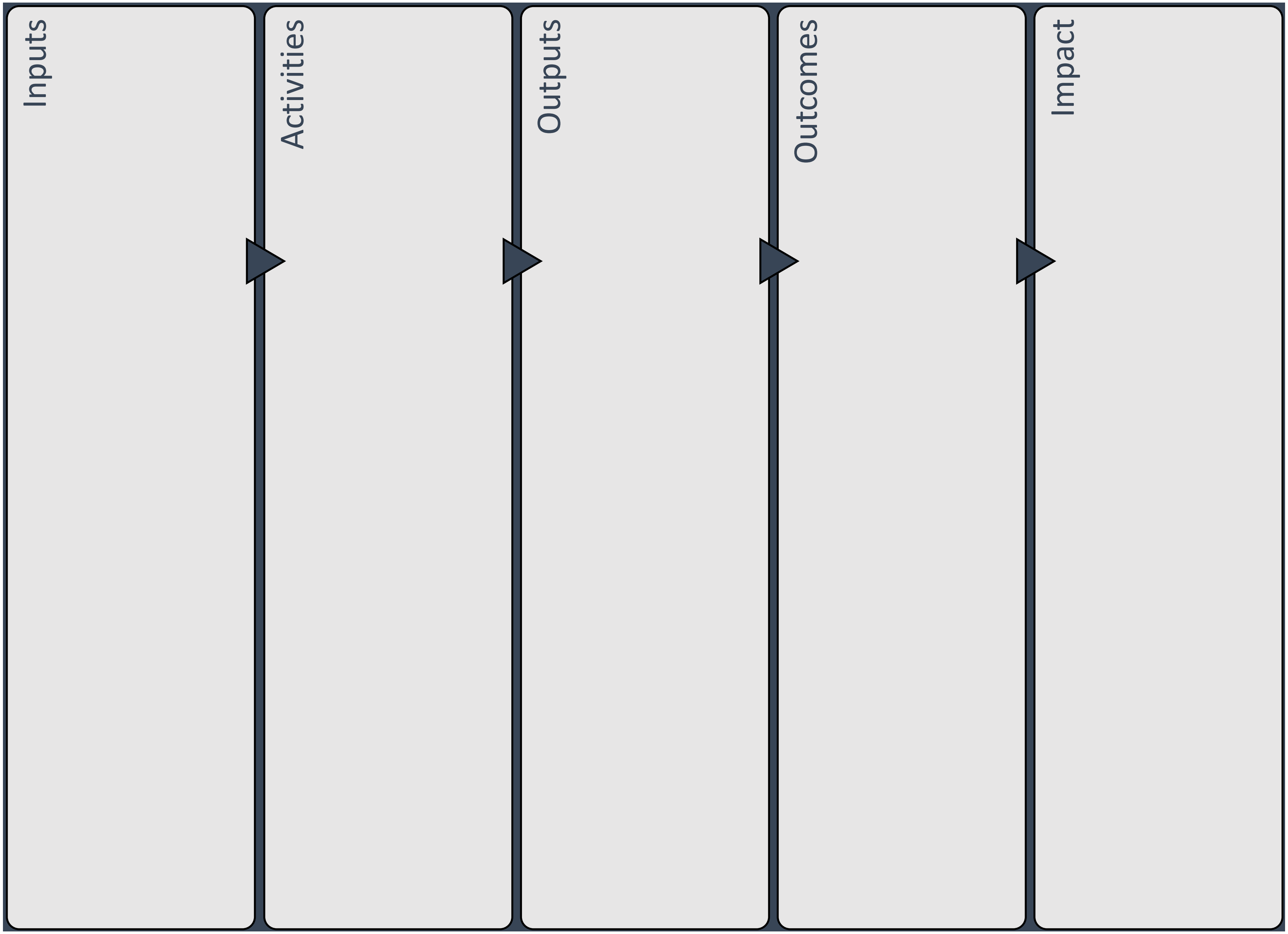


Figure 1 – Logic Model Template

THE MEASUREMENT CHALLENGE

Challenge: Local collaboratives must communicate progress on the key outcomes of each programmatic/niche initiative, however, each initiative requires its own unique indicators and methods.

Our solution: Local collaboratives' efforts to track and report on progress should be shaped by some of the key principles that we introduced in *Workbook | Getting to Impact: Foundations of Measurement.*

Four Key Principles

There are four key principles that are critical to guide you through this challenge. Refer back to Foundations of Measurement for resources and practice exercises that will help familiarize you with each of these principles:

- **Focus on priority measures** – While it is tempting to measure *everything*, even if you can gather that much data, this approach will just create noise and can confuse and overwhelm project partners and your audience. Distinguish which programmatic outcomes and impacts you *must* track from the ones you would *like* to track if you had the time, expertise and resources.
- **Use numbers and narrative** – Traditionally, evaluators and organizers have employed and reported using only qualitative *or* quantitative methods in an evaluation. Alone, neither of these approaches provides the full story. When measuring initiatives with complex results, we must collect and communicate both numbers and narratives to gain a better understanding impact and potentially reveal unanticipated results. No numbers without narratives and no narratives without numbers.
- **Make informed choices based on your capacity** – Be realistic about what resources you have to employ your measurement approach. This will help you decide whether you can build-your-own evaluation methods and indicators, or whether you should look to adopt or adapt what already exists.
- **Assess the value of changes** – Measurements without an assessment of significance don't mean much. Are your results showing improvements, progress towards achieving your goal(s), positive trends in relation to peers or against overall standards, and how do diverse stakeholders perceive the value of the change?

Refer to Table 1 for resources with tips on how to construct your own indicators and methods for measuring niche innovation outcomes.

Table 1 – Indicator and Evaluation Method Resources

Resource	Description	Source
Building a Common Outcome Framework to Measure Non-Profit Performance	This guide from the Urban Institute outlines core indicators for 14 categories of non-profit organizations, then provides a common framework that can be used by all non-profit programmes. While it may not cover all indicators that emerge in a local effort to reduce poverty, its examples are instructive.	https://www.betterevaluation.org/resources/guide/building_a_common_outcome_framework

Resource	Description	Source
Mixing Methods for Rich & Meaningful Insight	The different perceptions of participants regarding the effectiveness of a project can, at times, be hard to identify. It can become extremely difficult to effectively incorporate these differences of opinion into an evaluation so that they make sense. This article provides a detailed examination of how this was done during a project among small vegetable producers in the Andes in 2010.	https://www.betterevaluation.org/sites/default/files/Mixing%20Methods%20for%20Rich%20and%20Meaningful%20Insight.pdf
Choosing the Appropriate Evaluation Methods Tool	A spreadsheet that contains a series of questions and prompts, the results of which provide an indication of which evaluation methods will and will not be appropriate to use.	https://www.betterevaluation.org/en/resources/tool/BOND-Choosing-Appropriate-Eval-Methods-Tool

GROUP EXERCISE #2

Purpose*: Create a plan for developing a set of indicators and a measurement method that matches your level of capacity and influence.*

Exercise: After exploring methods for gathering and analyzing data from the resources in Table 1 (above), answer the questions below. Use the Table 2 worksheet, on the next page, to map your evaluation methods to the outputs and outcomes you identified in Exercise 1.

1. How much effort can you put in to develop and use programmatic indicators?

2. What actions might you take to improve your ability to develop relevant indicators with your partners?

Table 2 – Developing Indicators and Methods/Data Sources: Common Worksheet

Change	Indicator	Method/Data Source	Roles & Resources
Programmatic Outputs			
Ex. Increased uptake of small low-interest loans	# of loans out	Program financial report	Lead - Finance Department Resource - Accounting Software
Programmatic Outcomes			
Ex. Reduced borrowing costs	$/% difference in cash crunch versus payday loans	File review	Lead - Frontline staff Resource – Client Baseline Data
Programmatic Impact			
Ex. Increased assets	Participant rating	Guided self-assessment	Lead - Beneficiaries

THE LEVEL OF INFLUENCE/CAPACITY CHALLENGE

Challenge: Local collaboratives have uneven levels of evaluation capacity and influence on their ability to measure the results of local poverty reduction efforts.

Our solution: Local collaboratives need to be clear on their level of capacity and influence on measurement activities in order to develop a strategy for gathering, analyzing and communicating intervention outcomes.

Convenors and evaluators of poverty reduction collaboratives must weave together a patchwork of data to create a coherent results story. However, your ability to control or influence what data is collected, how and by whom is dependent on your strategy and structure. Convenors also face resourcing challenges. With lower levels of capacity, collaboratives must either raise additional funding dollars or choose an evaluation approach that may produce a less accurate picture of the connection between outcomes and impact. Whichever method you select, ensure that people are aware of how your capacity influences the rigour of your results.

GROUP EXERCISE #3

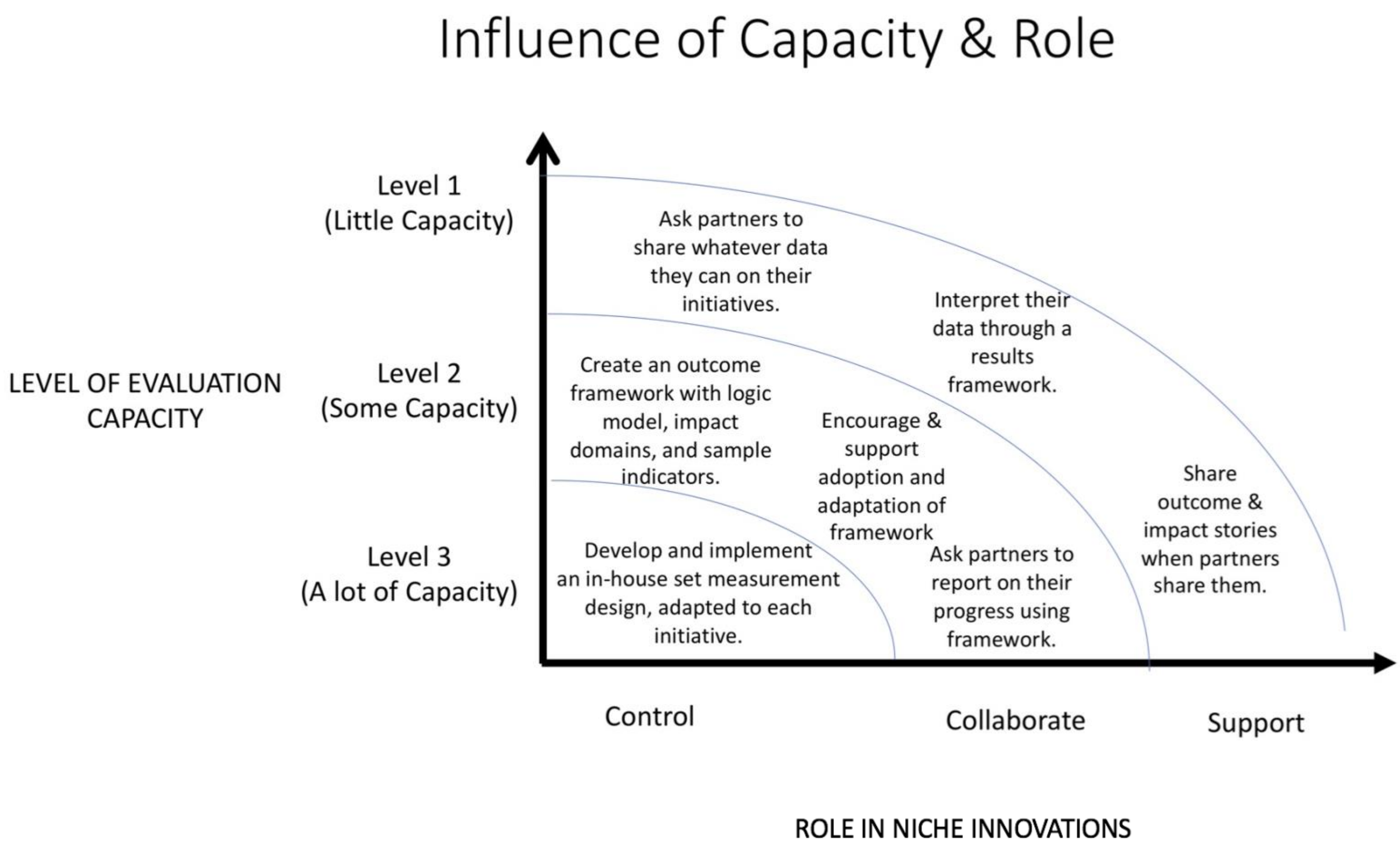
Purpose*: Determine what kind of strategy to employ to develop indicators and collect data, based on your collaborative's capacity and influence and control of the niche innovation(s).*

Exercise: Use the Figure 2 matrix, on the next page, to help you answer the questions below.

1. What is your strategy for developing relevant indicators and gathering the data for your niche innovations with your partners?

2. What actions might you take to improve your ability to develop relevant indicators and collect the data with your partners?

Figure 2 – Influence of Capacity & Role



THE SCALING CHALLENGE

Challenge: The social innovators behind some (but not all) niche innovations decide to scale the initiative and try to understand their greater impact, which cannot be easily be captured using traditional logic model or theory of change.

Our solution: Local collaboratives can employ a scaling framework that touches on five 'domains' or 'outcome areas' to communicate their scaling progress: up, out, deep, screen and infrastructure.

Highly successful local projects too often fail to demonstrate meaningful impact on the broader systems they are operating within. So how do we grow or spread the use of this good idea so that it can have a greater impact? The resources listed in Table 3 below provide an overview of the five ways we can expand and accelerate a promising new solution.

Table 3 – Strategies for Scaling Social Innovations

Resource	Description	Source
What We Know So Far: Evaluating Efforts to Scale Innovations	A summary of five dimensions of scaling and the implications for the indicators and methods that might be employed for evaluation.	https://www.tamarackcommunity.ca/library/evaluating-efforts-scale-social-innovation
Scaling Out, Scaling Up and Scaling Deep: Advancing Systemic Social Innovation and the Learning Processes to Support It	A game-changing resource that introduced three dimensions of scaling – up, out and deep – with examples and techniques to assist social innovators to be more systematic in their effort. A deep dive but an important one for anyone involved in scaling innovation to reduce poverty.	https://cdn2.hubspot.net/hubfs/316071/ScalingOut_Nov27A_AV_BrandedBleed.pdf
Problematizing Scale in the Social sector (1): Expanding Conceptions	An important follow up to the ground-breaking piece on scaling out, up and deep that adds two other dimensions of scaling: scree and infrastructure. Equally important to social innovators who want to make a greater impact with their successful experiments.	https://inwithforward.com/2018/01/expanding-conceptions-scale-within-social-sector/

Once you have decided to pursue scaling your niche initiative innovation, refer to Table 4 below for options on selecting indicators and methods to help you understand and report the greater outcomes that scaling the initiative has had.

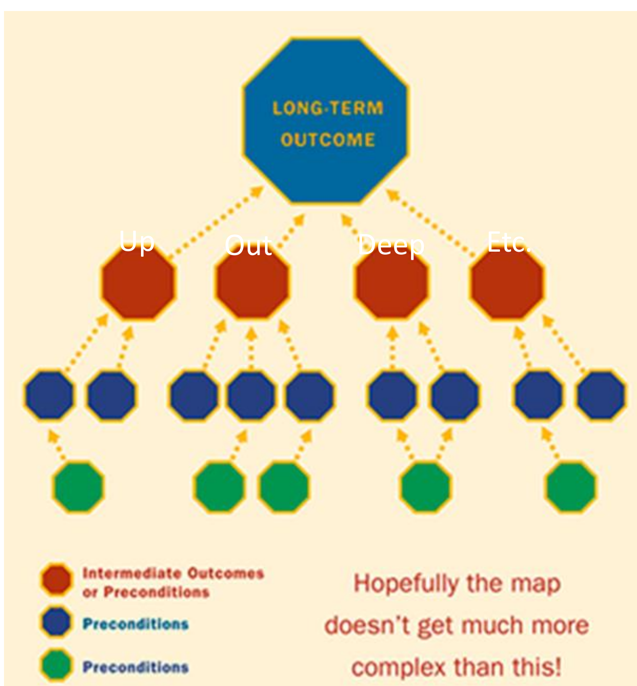
Table 4 –Method and Indicator Options for Measuring Scaling Outcomes

Dimension	Description	Indicators (Method)
Up	The expansion of an innovation's original size or replication by others.	Changes in budgets, partners and networks (e.g. network analysis)
Out	Changing regulations, policies, practices,	Number, variety and significance of

Dimension	Description	Indicators (Method)
	structures to enable the 'mainstreaming' of the innovation.	policy change (e.g. Significant Instance of Policy & Systems Change)
Deep	Capturing the 'hearts & minds' of people in a system so that they own and support the innovation and its expansion.	Examples of changed awareness and support of key stakeholders (e.g. Bellwether evaluation).
Scree	Developing complementary and/or new innovations to support the original one.	Examples of complementary innovations (e.g. environmental scan).
Infrastructure	Creating the skills, knowledge, networks and resources to drive and support the entire scaling efforts.	Examples of new supports for scaling (e.g. case studies).
Impact	The number of people exiting poverty and/or experiencing reductions in poverty.	Employing mixed methods that are suitable to the innovation being scaled (e.g. surveys, interviews, etc.).

Understanding Outcomes of Scale

While an imperfect approach, Theory of Change provides a means of mapping how scaling up, out, deep, screen, and/or infrastructure are important and impactful means for achieving long-term poverty reduction goals. By incorporating the five dimensions or "ways" of scaling in the logic of your Theory of Change, you can identify the connection between your program/niche initiative and greater outcomes in awareness and will; policy and systems change; and direct benefits to individuals and families beyond the scope of your original initiative.



GROUP EXERCISE #4 (OPTIONAL)

Purpose: *Determine your method(s) for measuring the results of scaling your innovation.*

Exercise: Reflect – Referring to Tables 3 and 4 on the previous page, what should you be tracking to show the outcomes of your scaling efforts?

REFLECT: HAVE YOU INCORPORATED THE 12 MEASUREMENT PRINCIPLES?

Check off and describe how you have applied each of the principles to your measurement plan.

Principle	X	Niche Innovations (Program, Project and Service Interventions)
1. Clarify purpose	X	Ex. Determine how outcomes from all four of our housing and homelessness programs are decreasing core housing need.
2. Accept imperfection		
3. Align with plan priorities		
4. Prioritze measurement		
5. Narratives and numbers		
6. Weave data together		
7. Match methods to capacity		
8. Adapt, adopt, build		
9. Estimate contribution		
10. Assess value		
11. Make appropriate claims		
12. Learn by doing		

NOW WHAT?

Once you have finished the exercises and explored the supporting materials, connect with your Manager of Cities. They will debrief with you on what you have been able to adapt well and what you are having challenges with. They can clarify concepts and connect you with peers or resources should you require more information.

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