

Box 20: Seven Strategies to Accelerate the Impact of Field-Building Activities

The most strategic contributions on how to accelerate, spread, scale up, and deepen social innovations derived from a diverse literature¹⁴⁶ point to several cross-cutting strategies. The first four (Framing, Scaling out, Scaling up, Scaling deep) are frequently described in the literature as occurring sequentially, whereas the next two (Integration and Acceleration) are particularly relevant to and aim at improving the quality and systemic approach of interventions. The final one (Learning) is a necessity consistently called for in any dynamic and complex problem area (Figure 34).

Our more specific recommendations offered in this chapter all fall into one or more of these seven categories. Consider using this text box as a “check” on the field-building interventions you might consider: if planned activities do not contribute in one of these seven ways to rapidly advancing the field, should they be pursued now?

Framing – Framing is often the first step required in any effort to work toward bigger change. It brings focus to the central problem around which actors come together; and is a necessary step toward developing a unifying vision and narrative and formulating a shared purpose to work on. Framing large-scale change must connect individual motivations and values to commonly shared values, and is a critical, illuminating process in helping people understand how their individual concerns and efforts fit within the larger common concerns and efforts.

Scaling out – Scaling-out tactics aim for greater impact through dissemination of ideas and practices to different geographies and more people. Efforts that have been critically evaluated and found to be successful are replicated in more places through mechanisms such as extension of efforts, franchising, branching out, or—once it is recognized that contexts are unique and require adjustments of standard practices—by spreading core principles and allowing those to be implemented in whatever ways work. Trainings and accreditation systems are example mechanisms central to field building.

Scaling up – While often used colloquially for any effort that accelerates change, scaling up here specifically denotes any strategy that aims at changing existing institutions (policies, laws, markets, “rules of



Figure 34: Seven cross-cutting strategies to rapidly increase the impact of field-building activities. Source: Susanne C. Moser, used with permission

the game,” procedures) to generate systematic impact that applies to a great number of situations, and typically engages new or unusual partners in doing so. As such, scaling up aims deeper than scaling out; it aims at institutional change in which powerful actors may be vested. Thus, it often requires political maneuvering, policy advocacy, coalition building, movement building, and protest to effectively change the status quo. Other tactics can be more collaborative and co-creative in nature.

Scaling Deep – Scaling deep¹⁴⁷ aims at creating durable change at the cultural roots of society by changing hearts and minds, values, and cultural practices. It is often the result of the limits of scaling out and scaling up and can change framings as well. Tactics include deliberate efforts in changing language and narratives; facilitating difficult dialogues to address deep-seated problems; or creating immersive programs to change beliefs, ideas, and norms. It also entails building (transformative) learning communities and capacity, (re-)building trustful relationships, or reimagining new power relationships.

Integrating – Integrating applies holistic thinking and practices to improve outcomes. To overcome silos or segregated efforts, tactics aim to bring together mentally, practically, or institutionally disconnected parts and join them for greater collective impact. Integrating involves learning about system dynamics and occurs through voluntary action or mandates, for example, “bringing the whole system into the room;” identifying shared values and language; coordinating across sectors, entities, differences, and related activities to reinforce each other; or changing institutional structures and approaches to allow systems to be addressed in an integrated fashion.

Accelerating – The need for acceleration of responses is particularly relevant to problems that are evolving and themselves speeding up. Acceleration aims at increasing the ability to apply practices more quickly and easily. Tactics involve concerted efforts at experimentation, innovation, and commitment to widespread application of successful pilot tests; removing challenges that make it difficult for entities to work efficiently and collaboratively (such as lack of general operating support or leadership, limited capacity for organizational development, communication, or fundraising); or overcoming barriers to progress by, for example, eliminating bureaucratic red tape, streamlining processes, centralizing information or funding resources.

Learning – All large-scale change efforts are inherently dynamic, complex, and move those involved into uncharted territory, which is why building mechanisms for monitoring, rapid feedback, evaluation, and learning into them is a strategic and self-correcting necessity. Tactics range from the informal to the formal, including education and training efforts, peer-learning networks, deliberate monitoring and evaluation practices, and frequent gatherings to review and adjust practices and approaches.