Scaling Strategy Worksheet:

Planning for scale

Purpose

This guidance document is intended to support organizations or institutions planning for or in the process of scaling[1] an education initiative.[2] It includes guidance for articulating a clear, measurable, and timebound scaling goal and high-level strategy, serving as both a "north star" to guide scaling efforts and as a dynamic planning document to periodically revisit and update based on new insights, data, and changes in the environment. The tool is based on the "Scaling Plan Template" originally developed by Management Systems International (MSI a Tetra Tech Company) and was adapted to education by the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at Brookings in collaboration with Larry Cooley, president emeritus and senior advisor, MSI; it has been further refined based on colleagues' feedback and used in multiple countries around the world.[3]

Audience

The guidelines are designed for practitioners, policymakers, and funders who are supporting an education initiative— or elements of an initiative—to move to a larger scale.

Process

The scaling strategy should result from the collective thinking of key actors involved in scaling. The composition of the group developing and refining the strategy will necessarily differ depending on context, initiative, and stage of scaling, and may include a core team of individuals from the implementing organization or encompass a broader set of stakeholders, such as relevant representatives from government or funding organizations.

Developing and refining a scaling strategy is an ongoing process that often takes place over several months, not in a single sitting, and should be tailored to the context. A small team should create the first draft of the strategy—drawing directly from previous discussions and existing data, including from any stakeholder mapping, political economy analyses, or previous scaling plans. Additional background research to fill gaps and triangulate information is sometimes necessary, and other scaling tools can also help inform the strategy's development.[4]

Once there is an initial draft of the scaling strategy, the narrative or subsections can be brought to a broader group of stakeholders for input and discussion. Developing an abridged version or a visual representation of the strategy can help in discussions with a broader group of stakeholders. In particular, a driver diagram tool[5] can be a useful approach for visually representing the scaling goal and key drivers identified for making progress toward that goal.

1. In this document, scaling refers to a range of approaches that both expand and deepen the impact of education interventions, leading to lasting improvements in people's lives.
2. Initiative refers to a program, model, approach, or policy in its entirety or to specific components of one, designed to address a particular problem in the education system.
3. This tool was also informed by: World Health Organization and Expandnet, "Nine steps for developing a scaling-up strategy," (Geneva, Switzerland: World Health Organization, 2010).
4. For example, for a scaling goal that includes government institutionalization or handover of an initiative, it can be useful to conduct a baseline assessment of the extent to which the initiative has been integrated into existing national structures, in order to track and monitor progress over time and identify priority actions. The "Institutionalization Tracker" can be a useful resource here. See: Jenny Perlman Robinson, Molly Curtiss Wyss, and Patrick Hannahan, "Institutionalization Tracker: Assessing the integration of an education initiative into a system," (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, July 2021).
5. Lloyd Provost and Brandon Bennett, "What's your theory? Driver diagram serves as tool for building and testing theories for improvement," *Quality Progress* (July 2015) :36-43.

Guide for developing a scaling strategy for an education initiative

Vision

Summarize the need (size and scope), individuals or communities of focus, scaling goal(s), and expected result of delivering the proposed initiative at scale.

Summary of scaling strategy

Delivering and sustaining an initiative at scale requires a realistic assessment of the prospects and parameters for scaling, and the challenges that stand in the way. It also requires careful consideration of what is being scaled, for whom, and by whom.

Summarize the strategy for bringing the proposed initiative to scale and for sustaining its benefits, including the proposed scaling approach and pathway(s) and, where applicable, how the plan is tailored to address different ways the problem or its solution may manifest in different populations and contexts. This should consider any unintended negative consequences that may result from scaling the initiative. This section should be able to act as a standalone summary of the scaling strategy.

Credibility of the proposed initiative

In order to assess the feasibility of a proposed initiative being delivered sustainably at scale, it is important to assess the evidence whether that initiative represents a feasible and effective approach to solving the targeted problem. This evidence may take the form of evaluations, studies, and other research demonstrating the impact of the initiative, its applicability in a variety of relevant contexts, and/or its acceptance by practitioners, academics, and/or communities.

Describe the extent to which the initiative proposed is currently supported by evidence (and the source of the evidence) and/or the strategy for establishing that evidence.

Recognition of the problem and support for the change

Where a problem is recognized by communities and practitioners as significant and persistent and where the resolution of the problem is perceived by policymakers as urgent, there are greater opportunities to marshal support for and legitimize the proposed initiative.

Present evidence that the proposed problem to be addressed is recognized as an urgent problem among communities and policymakers. Also describe how the proposed initiative will take advantage of existing or potential coalitions to foster change and/or mitigate the impact of opposition to change. Finally, detail how the proposed initiative aligns with current country, regional, or local priorities.

Advantage of proposed initiative over alternatives and to the status quo

Support for new initiatives is influenced by the degree to which policymakers, practitioners, and communities perceive the proposed solution as preferable to the status quo or to alternative approaches.

Present evidence demonstrating that the proposed initiative is more effective and/or efficient than alternative approaches or maintaining the status quo. Additionally, include any evidence indicating that the proposed initiative is perceived by policymakers, practitioners, and communities as more effective and/or efficient than alternative approaches and whether it has buy-in from implementing organizations and across the broader system.

Enabling conditions and partnerships for scaling

To be successful, scaling requires champions, incentives, market and/or community demand, and certain "enabling conditions" (financial, institutional, political, social, and cultural). In addition, partnerships with other key stakeholders in the education system are often required.

What key elements or conditions in the broader system are likely to be significant assets or challenges to scaling (e.g., elected or appointed national or regional leaders and champions of a particular issue; external catalysts such as natural disasters, economic shocks, or donor funding; and political and institutional drivers such as elections and policy reforms)? What partnerships are in place or are needed to support scaling?

Ease of transferring and applying the initiative at scale

Implementing an initiative at scale requires considering how the solution can be adapted to meet the needs of different or expanded populations and the requirements of the larger policy environment.

Describe the most challenging adaptations that will be required to implement the initiative at scale and the approach to addressing these challenges. Which elements of the initiative have been identified as "core" to its impact and must be maintained during scaling? Which elements could potentially be reduced for a more simplified/cost-effective model?

Organizational capacity to implement initiative at scale

Adapting, scaling, and sustaining an initiative, while taking quality, equity, and efficiency into account, requires strengthening and often expanding the capacity of the organization or institution delivering at large-scale. These capacities are not simply more of the same required at small-scale.

Describe how the implementing organization(s) currently possess(es) or will develop the organizational capacity to bring the initiative to scale, drawing where appropriate on previous experience. What institutional capacity is lacking for large-scale implementation and how might this be addressed?

If implementation will be transferred from one organization to another actor (such as to the government), describe how this transfer will take place and the associated risks. If additional human and institutional resources are needed to support "going to scale" or delivering at scale, describe how sufficient resources and capacity will be secured.

Financial sustainability of proposed initiative

In most cases, initial funding is insufficient to solve the problem for all communities or to solve the problem in perpetuity. Experience suggests it is important to take government planning and budget cycles into account early in the process of developing a scaling strategy.

Describe how resources will be mobilized to establish a sustainable funding base for the proposed initiative at scale. Can the initiative be implemented within the existing system, utilizing existing infrastructure, human resources, etc.? What budgetary processes should be considered to mobilize longer-term domestic financing and what is the timeframe for doing so?

Actions, milestones, and timetable

Present in a table the key targets/benchmarks (including numbers reached, outputs, and intermediate outcomes) and intended timetable for scaling the proposed initiative over its full journey to scale. These targets/benchmarks can be quantitative or qualitative in nature (e.g., establishment of a steering committee or an approved policy or budget).

Monitoring initiatives as they scale requires different methodological approaches and tools than monitoring a pilot or at smaller scale. This includes gathering data on the scaling process, whether the initiative is maintaining its effect at larger scale, and what changes might be necessary to the initiative and the scaling strategy.

In a separate table, detail actions to support monitoring and reflection on scaling progress, assumptions, and strategies, including considering what additional data might be needed to inform the scaling process that are not already being collected and what additional support (financial, technical, technological, etc.) may be necessary to do so. This may include building in deliberate moments for reflection and ongoing learning. Indicate who should be responsible for these monitoring and reflection activities and propose a timetable for these actions, which includes—at a minimum—semi-annual stop-and-reflect sessions.

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