

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR DONOR ORGANIZATIONS FOCUSED ON SCALING IMPACT IN EDUCATION

This brief provides a targeted synthesis of recommendations from the report, “Scaling impact in education for transformative change: Practical recommendations from the Real-time Scaling Labs.” It is intended for international funder organizations—including private philanthropy and bilateral and multilateral institutions—that finance quality education

initiatives and support grantees and partners in the process of identifying, adapting, implementing, scaling, and sustaining education policies and programs. More details on the project research and methodology are included at the end of this brief.

EDUCATION INTERVENTION

- BOTSWANA**
 Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) - An approach for teaching foundational literacy and numeracy skills focused on frequent assessment and targeted instruction by childrens actual level rather than grade. Adapted for the Botswana context.
- CÔTE D'IVOIRE**
 Teaching at the Right Level (PEC) - An approach for teaching foundational literacy and numeracy skills focused on frequent assessment and targeted instruction by childrens actual level rather than grade. Adapted for the Ivorian context and use in French.
- JORDAN**
 Ahlan Simsim - A range of early childhood interventions covering all aspects of nurturing care provided to children in areas affected by the Syrian crisis. This report focuses on the inclusion of socio-emotional skills in the national school readiness program in Jordan.
- JORDAN**
 Financial Education Program (FEP) - A national program for teaching core financial literacy concepts through interactive curriculum. Classes are part of the regular curriculum and take place weekly in grades 7-10 and as an option for students in grades 11-12.
- PHILIPPINES**
 Early Language, Literacy, & Numeracy Digital (ELLN Digital) - A blended teacher professional development course for K-3 teachers combining multimedia self-study, classroom practice and independent reflection, and peer learning.
- TANZANIA**
 Learner Guide program - An approach that focuses on delivering engaging life skills classes to secondary students through young female role models from the local community.

World Map Callouts:

- Jordan**: Financial Education Program (FEP) Ahlan Simsim
- The Philippines**: Early Language Literacy and Numeracy - Digital (ELLN-Digital)
- Tanzania**: Learner Guides
- Botswana**: Teaching at the Right Level
- Côte d'Ivoire**: Teaching at the Right Level or Programme d'Enseignement Ciblé (PEC)

Recommendations for scaling impact in education



Engage diverse stakeholders in the scaling process.

Why? Actively involving actors from various roles and viewpoints strengthens the scaling process—bringing in new perspectives, complementary skills, and additional resources and reducing risk and fragmentation.

How?

- Explore avenues to combine your funding with financial and in-kind resources from government, private sector, and civil society actors to support grantees' scaling journeys at different phases.
- Consider funder collaboratives and innovative financing mechanisms to help reduce fragmentation, disperse risk across partners, and leverage individual organization's specific expertise and capacities.
- Invest in intentional, ongoing, and robust peer learning about scaling among partners and grantees within and across countries and regions. This can include providing funding for learning coordinators, study visits, virtual learning series, and staff time to participate in peer learning.
- Catalyze and support critical intermediary activities that play an important role in advancing scaling but can be difficult to secure financing for otherwise. These can include:
 - Convening diverse actors and the related expenses of reserving space, interpretation and translation, catering, and traveling to the location
 - Conducting ongoing and tailored research, documentation, and independent data collection
 - Providing access to external scaling expertise and technical assistance



Build trust and foster open relationships with grantees.

Why? Issues such as capacity limitations, mistakes made, and challenges faced can be challenging for scaling teams to share frankly with funders, especially in a project-based system in which they are incentivized to complete specific activities at pre-determined times and where course correction can be viewed as failure or wasted resources, with potential negative ramifications. Scaling is an iterative process, and without honest assessment of these constraints and flexibility to address them, they can become a stumbling block for scaling and sustaining impact.

How?

- Foster a culture of open sharing and learning from mistakes with grantees and partners. Ensure there are not negative repercussions for groups that share openly.
- Incentivize reporting not just how money was spent but what was learned and what did not work as planned. Ask questions in reporting templates about mistakes made and pivots needed.



Incentivize cost data collection and analysis at each stage of scaling.

Why? Cost data and analyses are critical for informing the scaling process. However, lack of data, limited resources and expertise, and lack of clarity on their relative importance often mean they get deprioritized in scaling processes. Donors have an important role to play in incentivizing cost data collection and analysis and providing support to undertake this work at each stage.

- How?
- Incentivize and support grantees to collect detailed cost data at every stage and to conduct cost analyses to inform scaling decisions.
 - Provide earmarked financial resources for cost data collection and analysis and access to expertise and capacity building.
 - Encourage sharing of cost information among partners to foster greater transparency and help move beyond cost data being seen solely as an accountability exercise.



Encourage data-driven adaptation and enable flexibility.

Why? Scaling is not a static process; the approach, strategy, roles, and areas of focus necessarily change over time. Adaptations, shifts, and mistakes are expected and essential. Building space for candid reflection and continual refinement can facilitate adaptation, but inflexible financing, heavy demands on time and capacity, and organizational cultures that discourage sharing mistakes can hinder the process.

- How?
- Explore ways to link financing to achievement of key milestones and short-term outcomes, not just outputs.
 - Allow for adaptations in scaling plans based on data, learning, and changes in the broader environment such as crises or political turnover.
 - Support grantees to dedicate space, time, and resources for iterative learning and reflection.
 - Provide funding for testing adaptations and offer opportunities to reallocate funding as needed.



Have patience.

Why? Scaling is a long, complex, and nonlinear journey. A phased approach combined with deliberate moments for collaborative reflection and learning is important to break the process into steps, navigate changes in the broader landscape, and respond to emerging insights. It is important to recognize the long-term nature of scaling and build internal structures and processes accordingly.

- How?
- Provide longer-term and more flexible financing to grantees.
 - Fund the collection of longitudinal process data to understand how scaling takes place over time.
 - Pay attention to resource needs in the middle-phase of scaling between pilot and national scale.
 - Instead of funding a series of short-term projects, use each project cycle to finance subsequent phases in the scaling process of a specific initiative or approach.

Research Summary

These recommendations come from findings from the Real-time Scaling Labs project, co-created by the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution with partner institutions around the world, which included four years of participatory, qualitative research on the process of scaling in five countries. In each location, the scaling lab process combined ongoing documentation and analysis of the scaling journey with a series of in-person and virtual convenings that brought together a diverse group of key stakeholders to collectively plan for sustainable scale, discuss and reflect on challenges

and opportunities faced, and develop and test adaptations and course corrections to scaling strategies through an iterative learning process. Data from each lab was collected, analyzed, and used in real-time to inform the scaling decisions for each initiative, and to develop individual case studies detailing the scaling journey during the period of the project. Process data and evidence were also analyzed across cases to identify common trends about how key drivers support the scaling process.

Where can I find more information?

Scaling impact in education for transformative change: Practical recommendations from the Real-time Scaling Labs

Country Case Studies:

- [Adapting, innovating, and scaling foundational learning: Four lessons from scaling Teaching at the Right Level in Botswana](#)
- [Improving children’s reading and math at large scale in Côte d’Ivoire: The story of scaling PEC](#)
- [Improving financial literacy skills for young people: Scaling the financial education program in Jordan](#)
- [Improving learning and life skills for marginalized children: Scaling the Learner Guide Program in Tanzania](#)

Scaling Tools and Resources:

- [Institutionalization Tracker](#)
- [Scaling Strategy Worksheet](#)
- [Adaptation Tracker](#)
- [Real-time Scaling Lab Guidelines](#)
- [Education Scalability Checklist](#)

Project Website: <https://www.brookings.edu/project/millions-learning/>

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