

# ENGAGING CHAMPIONS FOR SCALING IN EDUCATION

## ROSIE THEMATIC REFLECTION BRIEF

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### What is ROSIE?

To support and better understand how to scale effectively, in 2020, the [Millions Learning](#) project at the Center for Universal Education (CUE) at Brookings joined the Global Partnership for Education's (GPE) Knowledge and Innovation Exchange (KIX), a joint partnership between GPE and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), to facilitate a cross-national, multiteam, design-based research and professional support initiative called Research on Scaling the Impact of Innovations in Education (ROSIE). Since 2021, ROSIE has brought together

15 researcher and practitioner teams working in 30 low- and middle-income countries to study the process of scaling education initiatives for impact.

From this work, Millions Learning has developed three thematic briefs. This brief reflects on the 15 KIX teams' experiences to shed light on the **role of champions in the scaling process**.

[Previous research](#) from Millions Learning makes clear that champions can play an integral role in the scaling process. However, as awareness about the role of champions has grown, so has confusion about the diverse types of champions that can be engaged to support scaling as well as the roles champions can, and cannot, play. Drawing on the experiences of the ROSIE teams, this brief aims to address these topics by introducing a typology of champions and exploring different ways of engaging and working with champions.

### A NOTE ABOUT THE RESEARCH FOR THESE BRIEFS:

Since 2021, ROSIE has engaged in collaborative action research as well as more focused qualitative research on the scaling experiences of the 15 KIX-[ROSIE](#) teams. We have been systematic, rigorous, and reflexive about this empirical work, but there are limitations to our research. This brief is designed as an empirical essay rather than a research report. This means that we drew on our empirical work for the contents of this brief—and include examples from the research to illustrate and ground these briefs—but we also relied on our broader knowledge of scaling, research we conducted on other scaling projects, and our professional reflection. These briefs, therefore, should be used as guides filled with examples and reflections rather than strict recommendations.

## What do we mean by champions in scaling?

Scaling champions are local and international policymakers, prominent individuals, funders, and NGO or community leaders who become committed to an initiative or innovation and wish for it to be adopted and sustained at large-scale throughout a system. These are knowledgeable, credible, determined, and connected individuals with the vision, skills, and positioning to motivate others, foster increased commitment, and potentially secure resources to move an innovation from concept to adoption for scale in an education system.<sup>1</sup>







[Previous research](#) from the [ROSIE project](#) suggests that scaling teams currently engage with a range of stakeholders—including government at all levels, international and regional nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations, community groups and volunteers, students and families, and educators. Our ROSIE research also leads to a belief that it can be “beneficial to shift these [champions] into more active [partners].”<sup>2</sup> Although time-consuming, thoughtfully moving stakeholders to the more active role of champions carries two kinds of value for scaling: increased diversity and strengthened buy-in. This brief unpacks the concept of champions in scaling and considers ways champions are currently being engaged by ROSIE scaling teams.

## A typology of scaling champions

Given that the term “champion” covers a wide range of actors engaged with scaling in different ways for different purposes, it can be helpful to delineate types of champions and the various roles they can play in a scaling journey. Building off of previous work by Shaw et.al.,<sup>3</sup> Loosemore, Keast and Barraket,<sup>4</sup> Hartmann and Linn,<sup>5</sup> and Rogers,<sup>6</sup> we offer the following classification.

**TABLE 1**

A typology of scaling champions.

 <p><b>SYSTEMS-CHANGE CHAMPIONS</b></p>	 <p><b>CHAMPIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION</b></p>
 <p><b>INNOVATION CHAMPIONS</b></p>	 <p><b>CHAMPIONS OF PEOPLE IMPACTED BY THE ISSUE</b></p>
 <p><b>CHAMPIONS OF THE WIDER CONCEPT</b></p>	 <p><b>INTERNAL SCALING CHAMPIONS</b></p>



### SYSTEMS-CHANGE CHAMPIONS

- These champions are most likely mid- to high-level individuals inside government, although not exclusively in ministries of education. In some cases, they are former government officials.
- They are individuals focused on addressing a tightly identified issue or problem, rather than promoting any specific innovation. They are more likely to support a coalition effort than an individual project, and likely to advocate for contextualization (see box below) if an innovation is being transferred from another location.
- These champions are usually charismatic, experienced, driven by concern about a specific problem in their context, and have

a wide network of influence. Because they are charismatic and good at maintaining relationships, these champions tend to value personal connections. While they are needs-focused, they are typically not idealistic and have a realistic view of the current political economy, how to accomplish things in the public sector, and what progress is feasible.

- Because they are problem/opportunity-focused, they are interested in *impact*. Therefore, a combination of offering them qualitative data and inviting them to observe outcomes first-hand can be effective for garnering their interest.
- It is better to approach these champions for substantive input or advice on an issue rather than try to “sell” them on the innovation itself. Systems-change champions are not simply promoters, but instead expect to be thought partners who influence the scaling approach. It is important to genuinely seek their advice and feedback.
- However, because of their time constraints, professional responsibilities, and need to be perceived as independent, they cannot be

expected to be deeply involved in the daily work of scaling nor can they attend every meeting. It is important to identify specific moments when they can be strategically involved. Systems-change champions often play an important role in the following:

- » High-level events where hierarchy and representation matter;
  - » Individual meetings where they can connect the scaling team to different government agencies and departments; and
  - » Strategy sessions where their knowledge of windows-of-opportunity can inform the scaling strategy.
- This type of champion is hard to cultivate! In success cases, a systems-change champion is usually part of the scaling journey from the beginning, rather than brought on later. That, however, does not mean that it is not useful to look for these champions to engage, no matter where in the scaling process one is.

**TERMINOLOGY:** Given the popularity of implementing education innovations around the world, the act of adapting—or *contextualizing*—the innovation to the particulars of each new location is crucial. There is surface contextualization (fitting the language, curricular standards, and technical aspects of an innovation to the context in which it will be used), and deep contextualization (adapting the deeper parts and processes of the innovation to the cultural, cognitive, learning, and systemic features of the new location). There is more information on how government stakeholders think about contextualization in [Government Decisionmaking on education in low-and-middle-income countries](#).



## INNOVATION CHAMPIONS

- These are individuals who have actually experienced the innovation in a positive way—as implementers or beneficiaries (or both)—and want to promote it to their peers. These champions are specifically focused on the impact of the innovation itself (more than the problem/opportunity) and how to expand it to others.
- They are likely to be “early adopters”—curious people willing to try out new ideas and push for innovation as a general principle. Like systems-change champions, they are often driven by a desire to address an identified need or affect concrete change (though often at a more-local level). If they see that the innovation creates positive change, they will spend time persuading peers of its value.
- Innovation champions are often less likely to create change at the policy level, but they can be instrumental for scaling and sustaining the innovation at the classroom, school, or community level. They typically work or live in the site of the innovation.
- They are important to scaling because of their credibility and connections to their peers. Particularly for innovations that involve teachers or community members, a recommendation from a near-peer often carries greater weight than a policy mandate or directive from a supervisor. These champions can fill that role.
- Similar to systems-change leaders, innovation champions should be viewed as thought partners, rather than just promoters. They likely

have valuable insights about what is and is not working with the innovation in their context and how it can be adapted for improved uptake.

- It is important not to presume that innovation champions represent their peer group. They are individuals stepping up to support the innovation. They might be early adopters or outliers, and the reasons they choose to support the innovation might not convince others in their peer group in the same way (for more, see Rogers' work on late-stage and laggard adopters<sup>7</sup>).
- These types of champions are typically quite busy, and so it is critical to respect their time and engage them in genuine—not tokenistic—ways, which may include:
  - » Inviting them to share their experiences with the innovation with their peers through observations, testimonials, and participation in public meetings—as well as through virtual platforms such as WhatsApp groups; and
  - » Creating authentic spaces for them to contribute concretely during innovation design and strategy meetings and making sure to show them how their contributions are having a positive effect on scaling.

In addition to these two types of champions—which figure prominently among ROSIE teams—other types of champions can play a role in scaling. The following (adapted from Loosemore, Keast, and Barraket<sup>8</sup>) are not concrete distinctions per se, but rather broad categories.



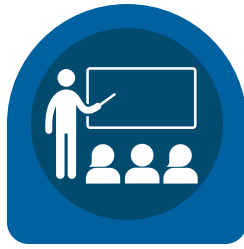
## CHAMPIONS OF THE WIDER CONCEPT

- These are champions focused on the broader concept of which the specific innovation is a part. For example, they may be champions of topics such as STEM education, socio-emotional learning, or foundational literacy. These champions may operate in one country, across several countries, or in the global sphere. As “connectors,” they can be valuable for linking the innovation to a wider community of similar innovations and implementers. Though unlikely to champion the specific innovation itself, they are well positioned to lend support by featuring the innovation as one example of the wider topic.



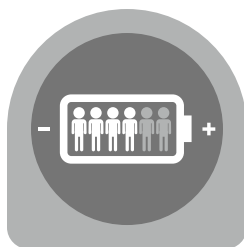
## CHAMPIONS OF THE ORGANIZATION

- These are champions who have partnered with or supported the scaling organization in the past. They are less focused on the specific innovation but deeply familiar with the organization that is developing, adapting, and implementing the innovation and are willing to speak on behalf of the organization to other stakeholders.



## CHAMPIONS OF PEOPLE IMPACTED BY THE ISSUE

- These are champions who have personal experience with the issue the innovation addresses and are willing to lend their support if they see that the innovation genuinely meets the needs of identified beneficiaries. These individuals may be champions for a specific community or group (for example, displaced populations or children with disabilities) or for a specific geographical area. These champions are highly knowledgeable about the context and can provide valuable insights on relevant barriers that might impede adoption or uptake. They can also be influential for ensuring that equity considerations are integrated throughout the scaling strategy. These champions should not be viewed as representatives or the sole “voice” of a community, however, unless they have been empowered to do so (for example, a representative of a teacher’s union or a community-action group).



## INTERNAL SCALING CHAMPIONS

- These are champions within an institution or organization who are already knowledgeable about scaling impact and are committed

to incorporating scaling principles into the organization’s daily ways of working in a system. These people will ask direct, concrete questions about impact, sustainability, and ownership in order to push an organization’s thinking forward and advocate for a “scaling mindset” among system participants.

## What types of champions ROSIE teams are engaging with?

ROSIE teams engaged with all of the different types of scaling champions described above, albeit to varying degrees. (It is important to note the short timeframe of this project: these observations capture only a short glimpse of relationships that in many cases were nascent or just starting to yield results).

Most commonly, ROSIE teams engaged with innovation champions. Multiple teams described how they engaged educators and program participants who participated in piloting the approach as champions. This is particularly true for innovations that focused on teacher professional development. Several teams reflected on the important role that these champions played, not only in convincing their peers to support the approach but also in advocating for local government to support the expansion of the innovation to new areas. This interestingly illustrates how champions can be advocates not only to their near-peers but other types of stakeholders, too.

Several teams also engaged systems-change champions. These teams tended to be farther along in their scaling journey and had built up long-term relationships with key champions over years of engagement. For these teams, site visits and including champions in designing the

# A champion is not...

Just as it is important to understand what a champion is and what role one can play to support scaling, it is equally important to be clear about what a champion is not. In the ROSIE research, several common misconceptions about champions arise that are worth learning from.

A champion is NOT:

- **Someone who is engaged only for a public event or only at the start and end of a project.** A common mistake our research at ROSIE identifies is engaging champions only for public events or presentations or after the final research findings are released. Instead, a champion is a co-creator who must be actively engaged throughout the scaling process for strategic advice, feedback, and relationship-building over time. Including them from the beginning is easier said than done, as these individuals are typically busy (partly what makes them effective champions) and are often neither paid nor formally recognized for their scaling contributions. Therefore, it is important to have specific, strategic requests for them, and respect their time.
- **A representative of a whole group.** While their views may be informed by their position in the system or society, it is important not to assume that a champion speaks on behalf of an entire entity or institution. In fact, a champion is an individual with singular interests and perspectives. Engaging champions from a particular stakeholder group is not the same as fostering buy-in or support from the group itself. This is especially important to keep in mind when considering how to engage with large and diverse groups like educators, teachers' unions, and historically marginalized minority groups.
- **A shortcut to institutionalization.** A common misconception we observe is the notion that if a key high-level government member becomes a champion, they can unlock government funding for the program or help get the innovation into official policies. In fact, budgetary and policymaking processes are complex and the influence that a single individual can have on these is often very limited. For this reason, it is unlikely that a champion on their own is a direct pathway to government institutionalization. Instead, champions can provide insights into these processes, identify windows of opportunity when they arise, advocate for the initiative within their networks, and provide useful feedback about how the innovation might align with current (or future) policymaking priorities.
- **An organization.** Another misunderstanding we see is equating champions with education alliances. A champion is an individual, not an organization. That is not to say that organizations or institutions do not have an important role to play in scaling an innovation, but rather, that these sorts of organizational arrangements are better defined as **alliances and partnerships**. These are focused on bringing a coalition of actors together around a common goal, while champions are focused on establishing and leveraging individual relationships. (For more on organizational alliances and scaling see [Millions Learning: Scaling Up Quality Education in Developing Countries](#).)



research process were helpful in sustaining the relationships. In other cases, teams identified mid-level leaders already committed to creating systems change and, by developing relationships with these leaders through involving them in research and capacity strengthening activities associated with the innovation, connected them to the particular scaling effort.

In a few cases, particularly with innovations that demonstrated success with children and youth, ROSIE teams cited examples of engaging champions who are specifically affected by the focal issue (such as girls' learning or using technology to engage learners with their community). These teams highlighted the valuable role these champions' public support and testimonies play in convincing other stakeholders and community members to support the innovation. Finally, it is increasingly clear that some members of ROSIE teams are, themselves, becoming internal scaling champions—pushing their team members to think critically,

supportively, and in increasingly sophisticated ways about scaling goals and strategies.

## How are ROSIE scaling teams engaging champions?

ROSIE scaling teams employed a range of approaches to identify, cultivate, and maintain relationships with different champions. The strategies below are organized from *most-to-least frequently seen* among ROSIE teams.

### **MOST COMMON: ENGAGING CHAMPIONS FOR SCALING BY SHARING EVIDENCE OF IMPACT.**

This approach is about sharing qualitative and quantitative evidence of impact through reports and presentations as well as inviting champions



to experience the impact of the innovation themselves through site visits and learning exchanges. Over half of the 15 ROSIE teams reported sharing data about their innovations' impact with potential champions and more than one third reported bringing stakeholders to observe the innovation first-hand. The prevalence of sharing reports and presentations as a strategy likely reflects the belief that sufficient evidence alone will turn stakeholders into champions. It may, however, be worth interrogating this assumption further. As [complementary research](#) carried out by ROSIE found, many government decisionmakers are inundated with positive evidence about education innovations, particularly from other contexts. They are less focused on the individual innovations and more on whether and how these fit into their broader, [complex decision-making ecosystem](#).<sup>9</sup> For these two reasons, and after reviewing other successful scaling cases,<sup>10</sup> it appears that [site visits](#) and regular meetings with potential champions may be more effective than simply sharing reports or presentations of research, even when the data is strong.

### **CONNECTING WITH ACTORS AT MULTIPLE LEVELS OF THE SYSTEM, NOT JUST THE CENTRAL/NATIONAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL.**

This includes looking for champions among mid-level decisionmakers, state and local authorities, and actors outside the education sector. Many teams pivoted to this approach after struggling to foster buy-in among national-level officials. Several teams reported success engaging mid-level government decisionmakers. This may be because mid-level leaders are more familiar than national-level policymakers with specific innovations, because their commitments are localized, and/or because they appreciate the professional visibility that comes by spearheading a new approach or working to improve their local system. Simply put, proximity appears to increase concern. Additionally, several ROSIE teams perceived that government representatives closer to the location have more time available for participation in scaling and a more intimate knowledge of the actual system in which the innovation is being implemented. Finally, we observed that a few teams worked with government champions outside the education



system—one through a Ministry of Youth, another through a Ministry of Culture, and another through civil society groups working with the Ministry of Information Technology. Champions beyond the Ministry of Education appear to represent a valuable system lever that is sometimes underutilized. Some teams also engaged champions outside the public sector altogether, including individuals from the banking sector or other private-sector actors interested in supporting education system reforms or growing public-private partnerships. Investing time in conducting a stakeholder mapping exercise before developing a scaling strategy, and then regularly updating it, is a helpful activity for identifying potential champions in different sectors of the broader environment.

#### **INVESTING TIME IN RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING.**

Taking the time both to deeply understand champions' individual motivations and goals related to the innovation and identify genuine opportunities to publicize the champions' own work and interests is worthwhile. This approach recognizes that collaboration goes both ways. Some ROSIE teams looked for ways to recognize or advance champions' own work—possibly connected to the innovation but not necessarily—in public conferences and national meetings or through co-authorship. For example, one team brought teacher champions to a regional conference so they could voice their experiences and talk about leading the innovation. Other teams found ways to highlight the good work champions do for education more broadly. Events that bring together different champions and stakeholders from various sectors can be particularly effective for fostering consensus, strengthening commitment and surfacing diversity in a single session. It is clear that relationship-building requires cohesion and continuity more than sporadic engagement and it is important to budget and plan accordingly to prioritize it.

**CONNECTING THROUGH COMMON INTEREST IN SOLVING A SHARED PROBLEM.** Only a few ROSIE teams report identifying and engaging champions by focusing on a shared *problem* rather

than on their specific innovation.<sup>11</sup> This may be in part because focusing on the broader topic or opportunity rather than the solution can be difficult in practice, since it sometimes means working on activities outside the narrow scope of the innovation. It can also be challenging because the expertise of scaling teams is often focused on the specific innovation they work on, whereas broader related topics (such as job creation, vocational education, or gender development) may lie beyond their training. However, such a strategy did appear to bring success in engaging champions for scaling for a few ROSIE teams. For example, one ROSIE team advised on a revision of a government's safe schools policy despite this topic not being a direct focus of their (girls' education) scaling strategy. We know from other education examples that scaling teams that solicit support by focusing on the **broader issue** rather than the particular innovation—at least, at first—sometimes find champions that last.

#### **LEAST COMMON: ENGAGING THROUGH CO-CREATIVE RESEARCH PARTNERSHIPS.**

Treating champions as actual scaling partners is not common among current ROSIE teams. This is a time-intensive and sometimes messy dimension of champion-engagement and involves giving up a degree of ownership over the innovation—which may be why it is rare. It may also be likely that scaling teams coming from NGOs operate from paradigms (such as rights-based education or socio-emotional learning) different from the economic or political science paradigms of government decisionmakers. Ceding power over the innovation and scaling process can be challenging, and requires being open to evolving roles, capacity sharing, and a willingness to compromise and share recognition. Done well, however, it can encourage genuine co-creation of the work, which addresses many of the aims of engaging champions: increased diversity of views, complementary ways of working, and deeper commitment from multiple constituencies. Only a few ROSIE teams mentioned including champions as co-creators in either their research or scaling-design process, but these teams reported that,

while not without its challenges (primarily in terms of time required, hierarchical sensitivities, and balancing multiple viewpoints), such an approach helps them build sustainable ownership on the part of government. We believe this approach has potential and incentives can be aligned to support this kind of intensive, co-creative engagement with champions.

## Challenges and learnings related to champions for scaling

Not everyone who is well-positioned and interested in an innovation will become a champion, no matter how effective the engagement strategy. Therefore, it is important for scaling to continually assess and reassess whom to engage and how. Someone might be well-suited during one phase but not in the next phase, or a champion's daily life or professional priorities might shift. Attentiveness, candid conversations, data-informed reflection, and learning from peers can enable teams to monitor which kind of personalities, roles, and commitments typically yield what kinds of support and outcomes. The typology offered earlier in this brief can be useful for this kind of analysis. Below we offer additional reflections.

### UNDERSTANDING THE RELATIONAL NATURE OF CHAMPIONS

Our research finds that ROSIE scaling teams differed over whether they hold “unidirectional” or “reciprocal” approaches to engaging champions. Unidirectional approaches viewed champions primarily in terms of what they could do for the project. Reciprocal approaches viewed champions as individuals with their own interests and commitments, and found ways that the champions' support of the innovation also advanced the champions' own goals or interests. We found that

ROSIE teams with a unidirectional view were more likely to see champions as a means of accessing funding or government decisionmaking. As mentioned earlier, the notion that a single individual can unlock public funding or affect policy changes is a common misconception and it may account for why these particular ROSIE teams commonly reported frustration at their lack of progress in leveraging champions for scaling advancement.

Conversely, we see that scaling teams that viewed champions as part of a reciprocal relationship were less likely to report disappointment about champions' lack of support at the policy level, perhaps because they were more likely to have a realistic view of what champions can achieve. Since they are focused on individual relationships, teams that pursued a reciprocal approach were more likely to have *more* and *different kinds* of champions at different levels of the system and more likely to report that champions were inherent to the scaling strategy. These teams were also more likely to take on the role of championing others, indicating that the notion of champions is as much an ongoing way of working as it is a single role. These topics are not clear-cut and we do not have sufficient data to come to a conclusion, so these reflections are put forth primarily as something warranting further consideration.

### MULTI-NATIONAL SCALING CONSORTIA VERSUS SINGLE-LOCATION SCALING TEAMS

The ROSIE scaling teams most likely to report a strong network of champions seemed to be regional or global organizations implementing or replicating innovations already established before the teams joined KIX. These groups had international visibility and pre-existing evidence of effectiveness for their innovation. They also worked with local field teams with experienced members who understood the dynamics of working with partners and champions in various contexts. As a result, they may have had more realistic expectations of scaling champions (but less familiarity with the uniqueness of any one context). We found that often (but not always),

teams that reported frustration about their lack of champions or insufficient success from champions were less well-known regional/global groups scaling an external innovation in a new place, or newly constituted local innovation teams that believed they needed more evidence before they could engage champions. These lessons highlight that candid sharing of experiences across types of teams and wider organizations can help calibrate expectations around relationships with champions.

### **FUNDING AS IT RELATES TO MEANINGFULLY ENGAGING CHAMPIONS**

It is also important to acknowledge the important role of funding. Too often, relationship building is treated as a side activity or something that only happens during big events. As a result, we observe that relationship-building seems rarely budgeted in terms of time or resources. It appears that teams with more stable and flexible funding were more likely to be able to dedicate time and resources to genuinely and consistently engaging with champions.

### **CULTURAL DYNAMICS AND TIME REQUIREMENTS**

Although there are lessons and strategies about champions that can be applied across teams and locations, there will always be context-specific cultural and hierarchical dynamics that affect how the relationships form. It is essential for any scaling team to consider these contextual nuances as they develop and refine their strategy for engaging champions. One team noted the importance of taking “the time to speak to people, go to the field and understand what’s happening there. And don’t think that you’re more clever [sic] than the locals.... They have the keys...to scaling, for identifying the right levers, for getting information.” We found examples of scaling practitioners from outside the country committing cultural or hierarchical errors that created hiccups in engaging government stakeholders. It is also clear from ROSIE research that the amount of time required to build meaningful relationships with stakeholders and champions varied across contexts but rarely fit the short project timelines often put forth. In fact, several





teams noted that their most important champions were people they knew from previous work.

### **RECOGNIZING EFFORT AND MINIMIZING TIME DEMANDS**

Finding ways to authentically recognize and respect champions for their time and expertise is critical. As mentioned, champions are rarely compensated or promoted for their collaboration on a scaling effort. Therefore, it is important to find meaningful ways to acknowledge their effort and opportunity cost. This can include publishing work together, providing platforms to share their expertise with others, and offering certificates or other recognition for participating in workings groups. It is also imperative to respect champions' time demands. For example, two ROSIE teams reported taking the time to translate and contextualize research for easy accessibility for their champions. One team mentioned the need to provide accurate and timely details about meeting locations and logistics. The ROSIE research highlights that small acts of

kindness and the always-appreciated practices of private appreciation and public gratitude go a long way. In contrast, wasting a champion's time, not responding to communication promptly, or not engaging genuinely when champions share thoughts and feedback is a sure way to weaken relationships.

### **MANAGING TURNOVER**

By far, the most frequent challenge ROSIE teams seemed to face with champions was personnel turnover. Teams attempted to address this by diversifying their stakeholder networks and cultivating alliances inside and outside the education ecosystem. However, because champions are individuals and their support is based on personal relationships, there is no easy way to inoculate teams against turnover. One cannot simply pick up where one left off with the next individual to replace the champion in their organizational role. Handover letters are useful but insufficient. A central paradox to

engaging champions is that it requires time to build personal relationships and yet one must expect turnover. As a result, time and funding for cultivating relationships and scaling advocacy should not only be budgeted for the beginning of the scaling process or at the end or when research will be disseminated, but throughout the whole scaling timeline. It is also important to formally and realistically plan for the (considerable) staff time required to build, maintain, and rebuild relationships with champions—and include this in job descriptions and formal workplans. Finally, it is important to not let relationships go when roles change. In some cases, champions can continue to be strong advocates and critical friends even when they leave their roles and may be able to use their valuable institutional knowledge to support scaling in new ways. Just as implementing roles may evolve during scaling, champions' roles can evolve as well. In short, continually establishing and maintaining relationships with champions is not an extraneous element; it is a core ingredient of any scaling strategy.

likely to be successful if they are bi-directional and engage with champions' own interests and goals, and if they find ways to recognize the time and effort champions provide. Additionally, just as organizations may look to cultivate champions, they should recognize opportunities to serve as champions of others. Of course, all of this should be done in a genuine manner, and only insofar as this work aligns with the ultimate principles and impact that guide the work. Human relationships are an oft-overlooked aspect of scaling, but they can be just as important as other more technical scaling activities. Therefore, cultivating champion relationships requires the same degree of planning, resourcing, and refinement when developing and carrying out a scaling strategy.

## Concluding Observations

Scaling the impact of an innovation sustainably is something that cannot be done by one organization or actor, no matter how dedicated they may be. Sustainable scaling requires broad stakeholder engagement and buy-in at all stages of the scaling process. Champions can play an integral role in building this buy-in and support among their peers and networks. Champions can also be important thought partners, illustrating ways that the innovation can be contextualized or adapted to have greater impact or scaling success. Champions can take many forms and will play different roles based on their location in the system, engagement with innovation, and own interests and motivations. It is beneficial to develop a diversity of champions across different levels of the system and invest time and energy in building genuine relationships with each champion. These relationships are more

# Guiding questions on research for and about scaling

- ① Considering the perspectives and frameworks in this brief, what kinds of champions does your scaling effort need right now? What roles do you hope these champions will play in your scaling journey? How will those roles change during the scaling journey, and will these same champions be able to fill them and/or what new champions will have to be engaged?
- ② To both strengthen engagement of existing champions and identify new ones:
  - a **Systems-change champions:** What motivates this person? What networks are they connected to? What is unique about the person that needs to be considered in how to engage them and keep them engaged? What level of engagement is feasible? What can you do to align your work with this champion's own priorities and motivations?
  - b **Innovation champions:** How will you engage them in the scaling process and incorporate their experience in adapting and refining the innovation? How will you create opportunities for this champion to share their experience with their peers and with other stakeholders in service of the innovation? How will you ensure these champions feel encouraged to continue their engagement with the innovation over time?
- ③ How are you going to recognize champions' time and effort?
- ④ What cultural norms or role hierarchies need to be considered and addressed when working with your champions?
- ⑤ How do you plan to foster opportunities for genuine engagement—and some collective meetings—among the different types of champions?
- ⑥ How will you demonstrate to champions that you are actually incorporating their feedback and advice?
- ⑦ How will you share information with your champions and keep them updated about progress? What will you need to do to adjust or repackage information so champions can share it easily with their peer groups?
- ⑧ How will you predict and plan for turnover among your champions?
- ⑨ What system can you develop to collect and reflect on evidence to ensure that the time and effort spent on your champions is well used?

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