Scaling Pathways

Insights from the field on unlocking impact at scale

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LEVERAGING GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIPS FOR SCALED IMPACT

Innovation Investment Alliance, Skoll Foundation, and CASE at Duke

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KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURS

The "There Is No Checklist" Checklist for Government Partnerships

The social enterprises we interviewed were adamant that "there is no checklist" that governs their engagement in government partnerships. And yet we saw patterns in the strategies and behaviors that they had refined over time to set them up for success. This "no-checklist" checklist walks through the three major steps: setting a vision for government partnerships (On Your Mark), preparing for the engagement (Get Set), and then diving in with techniques to build effective partnerships (Go). Within each step we have summarized key strategies and advice from the field, gathered through our research. More detail on each of these elements can be found in the paper—just follow the page numbers.

ON YOUR MARK: Set a vision for government partnership

Governments can be critical enablers of scale. But to use time and resources strategically, you need to determine how they fit into your theory of change and the roles you need to play to work toward that vision.

Tip: most social enterprises aim to achieve multiple goals simultaneously, and some change over time as the enterprise iterates and the context changes.

☑ **DEFINE PARTNERSHIP GOALS.** What role do you envision government partners playing to help you achieve scaled impact? Create a strategy based on your partnership goals, which can include:

CLEAR THE PATH: Enterprise directly implements its product/service, engaging with government to seek informal permission and/or avoid potential barriers.

OUTSOURCE: Enterprise directly provides a service or product, either through a government contract or by leveraging government resources or infrastructure.

ADOPT: Enterprise transfers management or implementation of solution to the government partner, either fully or partially (with continued enterprise role).

CHANGE POLICY: Enterprise influences the way government approaches or implements policy, allocates resources, and/or structures regulations.

☑ **ARTICULATE YOUR ROLES.** There are many roles your enterprise can play—now and over time—to achieve your government partnership goals. Articulate these to government and funders, and ensure you have sufficient capacity and expertise to play these roles. Common roles are listed below:

Implementer Roles	Consultant/Trainer Roles	Systems Advisor* Roles
Fee-for-Service/Product: Engages in a contractual fee-for-service/product relationship with government.	**Material/Tool Creation:** Creates materials and tools for government delivery of programming.	**Policy & Regulations:** Advises government on policy or regulatory changes to improve enabling environment within target sector and population.
Supplemental Staff: Provides additional staffing for government to increase its capacity to execute work.	**Training Programs:** Provides training programs to support government programs.	**Resource Allocation:** Advises government in prioritization of issue area and associated allocation of budget.

Complementary Implementation: Implements programs outside of, but in complement to, formal government structure.

Shared Implementation: Continues some direct implementation (for iteration and refinement) while government manages bulk of implementation

Programmatic Technical Assistance: Consults and advises on program development and execution.

Monitoring: Conducts program monitoring to track implementation and quality, and support improvement.

Fundraising: Advocates to secure external funding for government programs.

* While roles in each category can have systems-change orientations, those under Systems Advisor focus on high-level systems in-country as a default.

GET SET: Prepare for productive, long-term engagement

What will it take to set you up for success in your partnerships with government? Successful enterprises recommend pursuing the strategies below in preparation for your engagement. Remember: it's a marathon, not a sprint!

☑ **UNDERSTAND CONTEXT.** It may seem obvious, but isn't always taken seriously: Take the time to understand the context and the appropriate levels and decision-makers to engage.

- Understand and articulate how you align with existing government priorities, such as priorities for the sector and populations your enterprise is targeting.
- Plan to engage across multiple levels of government, understanding their needs and the ways in which their agendas overlap with yours.
- Identify other key influencers of government, who may need to be engaged to champion your work and/or to ensure they feel included in the process.

☑ **BUILD INTERNAL CAPACITY.** Ensure your enterprise has the capacity to establish and maintain government partnerships, including your talent, funding, and internal systems.

- Leverage local talent that can help navigate complex government structures and bring relationships and credibility.
- Develop (or hire for) the skills, attitudes, and competencies necessary to forge trusted partnerships, such as communication and negotiation.
- Seek out appropriate sources of funding to provide you with the flexibility to iterate and the consistency to sustain relationships once formed.
- Invest in the data collection, management, and communications systems anticipated to be key to effective engagement.

GO: Take off, using techniques to build effective partnerships

Once you've articulated your vision and prepared yourself, how do you actually go about engaging in a way that meets your goals? While there is no one single way, there are a number of tactics and strategies that can help you succeed and avoid common pitfalls.

☑ **BUILD FIRST OR TOGETHER?** Determine whether to develop and test your model first before bringing it to government (Build First) or to pursue a co-creation approach (Build Together). In reality, you will likely end up somewhere in the middle.

- Consider your partnership goals in determining whether to Build First or Build Together. If you are working toward Adoption, you may veer toward Build Together. If working toward Outsourcing, you may veer toward Build First.
- Take into account your enterprise's need for ownership and credit, as Build Together may limit both.
- If Build First, determine the extent to which you should still engage government in initial phases to receive input and help with future buy-in.

☑ **DETERMINE EVIDENCE NEEDS.** Determine the type and level of evidence needed to engage. Most organizations have some proof of concept or impact evidence before they engage government in a meaningful way.

- Determine which types of evidence actually match the government's interests. This is likely more than just impact metrics, and may include cost-effectiveness, partnership ability, and scalability.
- Understand how stage of implementation or stage of the partnership affects the level of evidence needed. Basic output data or evidence from existing studies may be sufficient at early stages.
- Be aware of the evidence expectations from the government's major donors, which could influence the government's demands and your opportunity to seek direct funding from those donors.
- Leverage your reputation and track record to gain trust in implementing new initiatives, potentially reducing the need for additional context-specific evidence at the outset.

☑ **FIND CHAMPIONS.** Identify and cultivate champions within the government who can serve as iteration partners and help move solutions through the system.

- Use existing partners in-country (NGOs, donors, etc.) to help you connect with key government decision-makers and potential champions to help carry out your work.
- Find and cultivate champions who are interested in the iteration process, since things will surely never go exactly as planned.
- Ensure that key relationships are not just between two people but are institutionalized for longevity.
- Make it easy for potential champions to personally see, hear, and experience your solutions by bringing them into close proximity with your work.

☑ **DEMONSTRATE PARTNERSHIP.** It may seem obvious, but is worth repeating: Approach government partnerships with an open mind, respect, humility, and an eagerness to learn.

- Demonstrate authentic respect and humility; you have as much to learn from your government partners as they do from you.
- Show partners that you are taking their input seriously and that you are making changes based upon it.
- Maintain regular contact and communications with your partners; don't reach out only when you need something.

☑ **ACTIVELY MANAGE POLITICS.** Take steps to minimize the extent to which your enterprise is negatively impacted by contentious politics.

- Ensure you build strong relationships with civil servants and technical experts (i.e., those who will remain even when political parties change).
- Spread out the risk of program disruption in any one location of operation by maintaining multiple programs and by being ready to shift if necessary.
- Recognize that prior to, during, and after elections implementation may slow and promises made by candidates may never come to fruition. Communicate transparently with funders about this tension.

☑ **MAINTAIN QUALITY OF IMPACT.** Support government in maintaining quality of impact over time as it plays a greater role, and support continuous improvement.

- Break your solution into small, achievable steps to make it easy for others to replicate—especially if you are moving toward the Adopt goal.
- Consider maintaining some direct implementation role so as to have a learning lab within which to continue to experiment and iterate.
- Create a roadmap, with stakeholders, to plan for human resource needs (including training and hiring) as new partners begin managing elements of your solution.
- Empower your partners with a new mindset and understanding of the ideal outcomes so that they can adapt to changing circumstances while keeping long-term goals in mind.
- Contribute to a plan for continued monitoring of performance and impact over time, with systems in place to use the data for decision-making.
- Support government in identifying sources of funding to continue to support new or refined programs.

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The Innovation Investment Alliance (IIA):

The Innovation Investment Alliance (IIA) is a funding and learning partnership between the Skoll Foundation and USAID's Global Development Lab, with support from Mercy Corps, that has invested nearly $50 million in eight proven, transformative social enterprises to scale their impact. In 2017, with all its funding committed, the IIA is focusing on drawing out lessons on scaling that are applicable to the social enterprise community with the aim to inform the ongoing conversation on how to create systems-level change and sustainable impact at scale.

The IIA's partners include:

- **The Skoll Foundation** drives large scale change by investing in, connecting, and celebrating social entrepreneurs and the innovators who help them solve the world's most pressing problems. Skoll brings an expertise in identifying and cultivating social entrepreneurs. Learn more at www.skoll.org.

- **The U.S. Global Development Lab (The Lab)** serves as an innovation hub. It takes smart risks to test new ideas, and partners within USAID and across other actors to harness the power of innovative tools and approaches that accelerate development impact. The Lab brings together diverse partners to catalyze the next generation of breakthrough innovations to advance USAID's mission to save lives, reduce poverty, strengthen democratic governance, and help people emerge from humanitarian crises and progress beyond assistance. Learn more at www.USAID.gov/GlobalDevLab

- **Mercy Corps** empowers people to survive through crisis, build better lives, and transform their communities for good. Mercy Corps brings its experience in developing field-based programming in over 40 countries and investing in disruptive start-ups to the selection, evaluation and management of organizations selected for funding. Learn more at www.mercycorps.org.

The Center for the Advancement of Social Entrepreneurship (CASE) at Duke University:

CASE is an award-winning research and education center based at Duke University's Fuqua School of Business. Since 2002, CASE has prepared leaders and organizations with the business skills needed to achieve lasting social change. Through our research, teaching, and practitioner engagement, CASE is working toward the day when social entrepreneurs will have the skills, networks, and funding needed to scale their impact and solve the world's most pressing social challenges. Learn more at www.caseatduke.org.

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Scaling Pathway series
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