

Saving Brains

Thematic Brief on Scaling ECD through Social Entrepreneurship

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INTRODUCTION: One cake at a time

“The cake tasted terrible. In the post mortem review by the cookery class, it emerged that a shortage of money had led to water being used instead of milk. The oven was lit too late so it never reach the proper cooking temperature. The eggs and flour had been combined perfectly, but no one noticed at what time the mixture was put in the oven. The recipe said ‘35 minutes’, so with a hurried guess the class pulled out the cake and watched the rising mixture collapse in front of them. They quickly dashed some icing sugar over the top which made things look much better and the hungry children in the classroom next door ate the cake anyway!”

Scaling a social innovation is far more complex than baking a cake, yet the analogy reminds us that without a few basics in place, the chances of success are much reduced.

The Web is full of tips for baking the perfect cake, but no one is really sure for how long you need to bake a social innovation, let alone what ingredients are essential. Millions of cakes are baked every day, yet scaled social innovations are harder to find. But this doesn't mean we're not searching for answers. This thematic brief collects the experiences of innovators at the front-line of scaling ECD social entrepreneurship models. Specifically, it comes from the experience of twelve organisations spread over five continents who attended a Saving Brains *transition-to-scale workshop* supported by Grand Challenges Canada (GCC) and Porticus in October 2019.

Our dialogues in the workshop focused on four major themes. In our cake baking story, the children substituted milk for water because of a shortage of budget. At the time, it probably seemed like a harmless choice. Both were liquid and the water was free. The consequences of their apparently pragmatic decision only became clear later in the day when they tasted the cake! In the

real life world of social innovation, there are constant financial challenges. Having sufficient resources to do the right thing in the right way is an essential prerequisite for success according to our entrepreneurs; so our first theme is **sustainable business models**.

Our cookery class struggled with baking one cake. Imagine the mess (and waste) if they had been asked to bake 100 or even 1,000! Even if the recipe stays essentially the same, it is self-evident that many things in the production will need to change, and every change is potentially a risk to the quality of the cake. What's more, new customers may have different needs or tastes - which means that even a perfectly baked cake may not sell very well in a different shop in a different town. Our innovators are deeply engaged with these challenges of **maintaining quality at scale**.

Our third theme is **technology and data**. For the want of basic data about the time the cake was placed in the oven, the children were unable to make an informed decision about when to remove the cake from the oven. They needed little more than a watch and thermometer. Our innovators (who know well the potential of

technology to scaling their work) are also hunting for simple, pragmatic IT to support communication and data gathering.

Our fourth and final theme is **leadership**. You might have noticed that this is an aspect missing from our cake baking story - and that is exactly the point! The class was occupied with the task. The work of some team members (those mixing the eggs and flour) was exemplary, but other equally important tasks were overlooked. The class was happy to cover up its sloppy work with some icing sugar. The French word “chef” means leader and our social innovators know that distributed leadership is critical for scaling.

This is the second brief in a series. In sharing the experiences and insights of these innovators, we aim to spark a dialogue in which others contribute their own ideas and reflections. This brief is thus a work in progress; see the next section on “Your Contribution” for specific ways to participate.


Innovators at the September 2019 workshop focused mainly on challenges of scaling ECD through social entrepreneurship, while the earlier workshop in April 2019 focused more on scaling through partnerships with government¹. In both cases the lessons learned overlap, have wider applicability and illustrate the varied issues that innovators must address as they seek sustainable social change at scale. We hope the cumulative learning will help ECD innovators see new opportunities, avoid pitfalls and ultimately help the sector to make greater progress towards quality ECD at scale.

¹ See the first thematic brief at: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1VOlbla5FhCanNCSnV0n6hT9Sc4hCiqwHr944Zfr2PO/edit?ts=5d934a95>

YOUR CONTRIBUTION: Four ways you can help



This document is not a final report, but a means to further synthesize and illustrate the dialogue we started. It is written as a Google Doc with an open invitation to everyone connected with the Saving Brains community (**yes, you!**) to edit and contribute your experiences. The goal is not to write an academic paper², but to capture the **real-life experience-based insights** of those bringing ECD to scale (without icing sugar).

You can contribute in four ways:

1. We need your help to illustrate the good practice through **vignettes** (that is “*a brief evocative description, account, or episode*”) that demonstrate the challenges and success of this work on the ground. Vignettes will be inserted in  **red boxes** throughout the text to illustrate the points made with **short, concrete, real-life experiences** (~200 words). We would like more! We know that it is tempting to only share successes ... but we encourage you to also mention things that you have changed as a result of early experience. We know that the front line is messy and not every story has a happy ending; but nevertheless, we can learn from it all. Please write a vignette by adding to Appendix C,

² If you would like to sample the academic literature of scaling in ECD, two recent papers drawing on earlier Saving Brains experiences can be found at: <https://nyaspubs.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/nyas.13684> (*Annals of the NY Academy of Sciences*, 2018) and https://adc.bmj.com/content/104/Suppl_1/S43 (*BMJ Archives of Disease in Childhood* 2019).

adopting (if you are familiar with the approach) a context, issue, solution structure.

2. This document is full of “**for example ...**” bullet points. Do you have another idea or suggestion that could help others? If so, please add your bullet point example to any list in the document.
3. Can you respond to a “ **HELP!**” flag in the document? These are points where editors have flagged content that particularly needs enhancing or improving.
4. Finally, at the end of each section and at the end of the document you will see some  **pink commentary boxes**. This is an opportunity to contribute a reflection or observation on what you have read. Can you see an angle, pattern or trend in what you’re reading? Is there a gap, opportunity or blind spot?

Please don’t just comment - get your fingers moving and add or edit some content! Your contribution will become part of a document that will be widely shared to help innovators around the world. If any of your vignettes are sensitive or need to be anonymous, contact andrew.bollington@viaed.net first to talk about how that is best done.

The result will be a rich resource for those on the front line and a grounded contribution to the global dialogue about what it takes to scale quality ECD.

GOOD PRACTICE 1: Sustainable business models

Social innovation, just like cake, costs money. When Marie-Antoinette, Queen of France during the French Revolution, said (allegedly) “*Let them eat cake*”, her error was in failing to understand that poverty, not a shortage of bread, explained the behaviour of her rebellious subjects.

In the search for a sustainable business model, it might seem obvious to refer to the world of business for answers. Indeed, in the good practice which follows, we see many lessons which transcend sectors. But social innovation is also different in important ways - for example, the recipient of the service rarely pays the full cost of the service. This creates a need for innovative approaches and creative ideas which can be inspired by, but go beyond classic for-profit solutions.

What have our innovators learned about creating a sustainable business model? Five lessons stand out from our dialogue:

a) Focus on the core; don't get distracted

Many of our innovators are true entrepreneurs at heart. When faced with a shortage of money, they innovate and come up with new ideas. Perhaps we could sell an app? Perhaps we could provide consultancy? Or maybe a shop in our parenting class with T-shirts, mugs and cakes?

These are all great ideas ... but **our experienced innovators focus on their core mission aligned business model. They warn that spin-off ideas to raise some extra cash don't really make the core innovation any more scalable.** Indeed, they may ultimately be more of a distraction - requiring substantial management

time, introducing new risks, even pulling the organisation away from what it knows best. If the cake business takes off, then you may find yourself really running a bakery with a small social enterprise on the side; but more likely, the cake business will provide a moderate income that helps off-set some overhead costs, but makes little difference to your mission driven ambitions for real scale.

What's more, having multiple revenue streams is complex to manage. While it makes sense not to have 'all your eggs in one basket' managing multiple small businesses (t-shirts, cakes, consultancy, etc) requires time and energy.

In an ideal scenario, your income and costs are driven by the core mission itself, possibly supported on the margins by spin-off opportunities (*also see point d. on pricing below*). If you achieve this, then the business and social models are much more likely to be aligned. If you need to compromise this principle, then do so carefully and be alert to the new risks you are taking on.

(As an aside, identifying your core mission aligned operating model is a strategy topic that deserves its own chapter. We hope to get to that in a future thematic brief).

b) A business mindset: sooner the better

Developing a sustainable business model requires a business mindset, as early as possible in the design of the project. It is essential to have someone on the team (who may or may not be the innovator) with the right knowledge and skills to develop a **mission aligned business model.** If the business model is

developed from the start alongside the intervention, then the business model and the intervention can be mutually supportive; whereas if you attempt to add a sustainable business model to an intervention which was developed without these considerations, then it might be necessary to make adjustments. The longer you leave this, the larger the adjustments might need to be.

c) **The children don't pay! So, who does?**

Build a model of the financial flows so that you know exactly where the money comes from and where it goes. Social innovations differ from most business models because the people who receive the service usually do not pay for it. Therefore, it's essential to know who is paying for your service. Why are they paying? Would they pay more for greater reach or higher quality? Can they be depended upon to keep paying? Where does their money go? How can you show them how their money was used?

To answer essential questions about the scalability of your innovation, every cost needs to be categorized so that you know what is a one-off (eg. the cost of developing a curriculum for a parenting workshop), fixed or semi-fixed costs (eg. the cost of running a website to advertise your parenting workshops), and variable (eg. the cost of photocopying handouts for a parenting workshop).

Once you understand this cost categorisation, the cost of scaling becomes clearer. If variable costs account for a high proportion of the total costs, then the challenge will be greater than for models with higher fixed costs. This is one reason why one-off

investments in technology (see good practice 3 below) can be an attractive option to facilitate scaling.

Some of the funders in the Saving Brains community issued a warning! If you receive money from philanthropic donations, then do not mistake this for a sustainable income. Only a few donors are willing to commit to long-term financial support for ongoing service delivery. Instead, they will want to fund specific opportunities for change or innovation to help you move to the next stage of your work. In practical terms, this means that they are much more interested in supporting one-off costs than variable costs.

d) **Don't only worry about costs; get the pricing right too**

In the nonprofit world, we often focus on managing costs. Indeed, with the right mix of passion and volunteers, many of our innovators provide a service that is amazingly cost effective.

But costs are only one side of the account. Getting the pricing right is equally important in creating a sustainable business model. Our innovators advise:

- Don't assume that the beneficiary is unable to pay at all and that you must provide the service for free. As in the for-profit world, you need to understand your "customers" (or clients) and work out what they might be able to pay. Even if this is only a very small contribution towards the total cost, it is sometimes the case that people value something that they pay for more; and that any kind of usage charge will be far more scalable than

philanthropic money. Only you will know if this is right for your work, but don't make assumptions.

- Not every "customer" has to pay the same amount for the same service. In the business world, companies develop variations of the same service for different customer groups - and in the nonprofit world, the same idea can be utilised. For example, parents in a more wealthy suburb may be able to pay a weekly fee to attend an evening parenting class, effectively cross-subsidizing another class in a lower income community.
- Introducing a fee for a service that has previously been free is very hard. Consider charging a fee from the outset, even if you later need to reduce or remove it. Having a fee allows you to test the relative value that people associate with your service.

In case you missed it, see the section on '[Understand the value of your outcomes to key stakeholders](#)' in our last thematic brief to consider if others may be willing to pay for what you achieve. To the right person, a quality outcome is worth much more than an activity.

e) A sustainable business model looks to the future

A break even budget and a few coins left over at the end of the year is a critical breakthrough for any new innovation. But, sustainability has a higher threshold.

- First, every piece of one-off investment (eg. a computer, or even the curriculum for a parenting course) will need

to be reviewed, refreshed or replaced after a few years. Sustainability means putting something aside to pay for these predictable longer-term costs, so that they don't become a budget crisis in any one particular year.

- Next, as organisations grow, so do their overheads. Professional management, financial systems, and more M&E are all essential investments in larger organisations. Therefore, every activity has to generate some 'additional' income to pay a share of these costs.
- As organisations grow, so does risk. Having reserves to help deal with bad news is essential for sustainability.
- Finally, what about the next big innovation? What is it going to cost to do something new and different in the future? Some of our innovators interested in attracting a government to run their innovation wondered how they would survive if a government took over the service and left them with no recurring income?

The lesson is simply that sustainability means more than covering the direct costs. In the 'hand-to-mouth' world of social innovation this might seem like an unrealistic message, but our innovators advised that this tough message needs to be incorporated into business model as early as possible.



COMMENTARY: Observations on Good Practice 1

Do you have a sustainable business model? If so, how did you get there? If not, what are your challenges and how are you working on them?

Your Comments *(please type directly in this box)*

[Type here]

GOOD PRACTICE 2: Maintaining quality at scale

Most of our innovators can bake great cakes. Some of them go to extraordinarily tough places to bake cakes. Some of them make cakes with a very limited set of ingredients. Most of them engage communities in cake baking. Some use high-tech equipment. All rely on a dose of passion in their cooking.

But what happens when these bakers try to double their cake output? Or triple it? Could they ever feed everyone in a city? Or a country?

At our transition to scale workshops, if you listen to discussions over coffee, the words 'quality' and 'scale' are nearly always uttered together. But the connection is not always positive. As we scale, a reduction in quality is a serious threat. Indeed the discussions tell us that the real challenge is not scaling - it is **maintaining quality while we scale**. So, how do our innovators do that? Four lessons emerged in our recent discussions.

By the way, you might have guessed by now that we're using cakes as a metaphor - please don't take us literally as you may be disappointed if you try to get any real cakes out of the Saving Brains team!

a) People are the key ingredient

In a sector where context matters, it's rare to find a simple statement on which everyone agreed: **Quality can only be sustained if the people we work with share the same passion for making a difference and share the same understanding of the outcomes we seek**. Recruitment and selection are therefore critical - and a major obstacle to growth is our ability to recruit,

train and retain good people. The consequences of finding the right people are enormously positive, while the cost of recruiting a poor fit (especially if you are slow to deal with the situation) can be enormously negative. Once recruited, helping every individual to connect their work with the mission and vision is also essential. *See the later section on leadership.*

b) Quality, scale and financial sustainability are interdependent

It might be tempting to focus on quality as an issue so important as to obscure everything else. However, our innovators see quality as "*symptomatic of deeper dynamics*", not a standalone issue (in particular, see trust and empathy in a moment).

Quality does not happen in isolation, it is interdependent with scale and financial sustainability:



In other words, quality at a given scale, is only possible if there are adequate financial resources. Or to put it another way, scale only makes sense if we can be sure that quality is sustained and that there are adequate financial resources to deliver it. Or, from the third perspective, we're wasting money if we scale something of low quality.

The job of a social innovator is to maintain the equilibrium of these three dimensions; an equilibrium anchored to the mission and values of the social enterprise.

c) Align data and outcomes to facilitate quality dialogues

We focus on technology and data in good practice 3, but they warrant a special advance mention here while we discuss quality. In our first thematic brief, an innovator observed "[If quality is 'tangible' then it can be scaled. If it's an 'idea', then it cannot](#)". In this dialogue, our innovators made special mention of the **importance of aligning data with the intended outcomes - and using that data to facilitate regular dialogues about quality across the team.**

The work of the Saving Brains Platform Team on "[Measurement for Change](#)" and the examples of innovator dashboards from the recent data workshop shows an increasing understanding of how to implement this good practice. Quality should not be discussed as an abstract idea.

Also, do not fall into the trap of believing that quality can be represented by quantitative data alone. Experience shows that innovators make use of quantitative and qualitative data to understand issues - and that they are flexible about the formal

and informal ways in which data can be collected.

d) It's critical to scale trust and empathy, not just processes and systems

Scaling social innovation is special in a number of ways, when compared to growing typical business services or product manufacturing. In dialogue with our innovators, you hear the words 'trust' and 'empathy' mentioned time and time again. Why?

These innovators are not replicating a product or scaling a standard service to reach more people. They are working amongst some of the most socially challenging situations on our planet; often in circumstances where others have failed or official systems are blatantly failing to meet human needs. People have been let down time and time again by systems they no longer trust, and by providers who don't fully understand the context.

There are no 'silver bullets' in these situations - but we do know that 'trust' and 'empathy' are frequently discussed by our innovators as being two critical ingredients to work successfully in these contexts. **That is, 'trust' earned from the community in which you are working through their active engagement; and genuine human 'empathy' between those at the front line.**

Needless to say, trust and empathy are much harder to scale than processes and systems. There are no short-cuts, but our innovators advise:

- Have people in policy positions connect with vulnerable people. **⚠ HELP! - does anyone have a good example?**
- Take extra time. You cannot rush this.
- Look at all 'power relationships' very carefully and focus on building respect.
- Remember that you start from scratch every time you enter a new community. Understanding the new context is critical; assumptions can be dangerous.
- Seek out existing trusted voices (eg. faith groups, other NGOs) and work collaboratively with them.

Empathy and trust is like the yeast in our cake. According to one innovator, *“empathy works like an infectious agent - it spreads among people and keeps building an ecosystem that accelerates further”*.

e) Scale step by step

According to our innovators, there is constant pressure to scale. The pressure might be self-driven - the wish to help more people in need - or it might be externally driven - pressure from an enthusiastic donor, for example. Although no one said it, perhaps being part of the Saving Brains community results in this pressure? Whatever the cause, it's important to scale with a balanced awareness of the opportunities and risks.

“You think scaling will solve your financial problems, but it sometimes becomes your financial problems” according to one innovator who described new levels of risk, and greater cash flow problems that ultimately led to the realisation that *“growth is not necessarily a great proxy for success”*. *“If you scale*

something that isn't working, the best you end up with is a larger mess to fix” sums up another. **Our conclusion: scaling is not a method for solving quality or financial issues.**

Also, scaling is not a binary choice. With the benefit of hindsight, larger organisations can usually identify a series of smaller steps that they took - which collectively built scale. What is your next step?

Linked to the earlier advice on quality, don't delay developing your quality measurement indicators as they provide a baseline by which to assess if the scaling is impacting on quality.

In a thematic brief about scaling these warning messages might seem surprising. We explicitly quote them here to help avoid any unintended consequences of our collective desire to help as many children as possible, as soon as possible.



COMMENTARY: Observations on Good Practice 2

We know that quality is critical. How do you make sure that it's not an abstract idea in your organisation?

Your Comments *(please type directly in this box)*

[Type here]

GOOD PRACTICE 3: Technology and data

Too much cake is bad for you. Let's talk IT instead!

Except, surprisingly, this topic generated less material than many of the other discussions. Why? Certainly, the Saving Brains community has its share of tech enabled innovations and experts. Indeed, "cutting edge" is the only way to describe some of the innovations. This discussion was also well attended during the transition to scale workshop. But, it seems likely that for many of our innovators, this is their personal Achilles heel - a topic they know to be important, but for which they personally lack expertise.

We know that technology, done right, is a means to shift variable costs into fixed costs. It's a means to communicate with virtually no transaction costs. It's a means to capture process data for quality monitoring without any extra user interaction. It's a means to achieve personalisation without sacrificing the benefits of a standard product. Technology and scaling are potentially great friends!

So, what did our tech-experienced innovators share with this group of tech-interested but tech-nervous participants?

a) You need someone who speaks IT

You need someone on your team (working for you) who understands technology, can speak the language, and has data management skills. You cannot outsource this to the point where you lack the critical ability to engage with a supplier.

This is not because a tech company will take advantage of your ignorance (the good ones will certainly not) but because only you (or your immediate team) can make the translation between your mission driven operational need and the data you need to make it happen. You cannot expect the IT company to develop the trust and empathy with the user community (see the previous section) to deliver a great solution without your direct engagement and support. And neither can you expect this understanding to develop as a result of short-term assignments, so be prepared to invest in relationships for the long-term.

b) Focus on the outcomes, not the technology

It's easy to conclude that a shiny new App will solve your problems. But before you leap to this conclusion, our innovators advised:

- Don't start with the technology. First, define what you need to be able to do (your outcomes). Write down real examples of this happening ("use stories") to make it as tangible as possible.
- Then, check that there's not a simple way to do it with a pen and paper.
- **Keep a clear focus on your outcomes. Remember, that you're really paying for the outcomes, not the technology.**
- Make sure that you own the data. Data management skills are very important.

c) Don't develop tech unless you need to

Our pragmatism continues with the advice that ***“Technology will help you, but it's not everything. It should compliment what you do. Don't become a technology developer unless you really need to - and only to the extent you need to”***.

If technology development is the right answer, then the team offered some suggestions to manage the risk and cost:

- Know your costs up front. Don't enter into open ended contracts.
- Consider existing platforms rather than developing your own. As an example, if you need to store and display videos, consider YouTube - it already has massive reach, sub-titling, can even provide per watch revenue; you could never replicate this level of service yourself.
- Cloud platforms are revolutionising the IT industry with “pay per use” models for facilities that would otherwise be prohibitively expensive to develop (eg. artificial intelligence image recognition)
- If you use cloud platforms (and you probably will) then know where your data is stored and know the rules/regulations in your country.
- App development is currently expensive (although it can be better at protecting intellectual property). Would a website suffice?
- Technology is rarely a one-off purchase. You will need to keep it up to date, patched and working. Budget for these costs as well as the initial purchase.

d) Data comes with responsibility

Holding data (on paper or electronically) about individuals comes with a series of legal and ethical considerations, especially when those individuals are children. These include data security, consent, data retention, access rights and many related issues that go beyond the scope of this document. **Before you make decisions about the data you will collect, it is essential to become informed about these issues.**

⚠ HELP! - can anyone recommend a more detailed resource on this topic?



COMMENTARY: Observations on Good Practice 3

What have been your successes and lessons learned in using technology to help scale social innovations?

Your Comments *(please type directly in this box)*

[Type here]

GOOD PRACTICE 4: Leadership

It is no accident that we have left the topic of leadership to the end of this thematic brief. It is the topic that unites all the others.

We started this thematic brief with a story about baking in which the absence of a chef (the French word for 'leader' which also gave us the English word 'chief') was arguably the real cause of the flat and tasteless cake.

Leadership is an important and emerging theme in the Saving Brains community. On this occasion we have also harvested content from a series of 'Abachaa' (or 'aha' moments) when innovators reported personal moments of learning, which we have linked to the key issues that have emerged in this thematic brief.

a) Foster distributed, collaborative leadership

Our innovators often talk about collaborative leadership. We take this to be **a network of people who lead with a common mission and purpose**. Leadership in social innovation is very challenging to scale if we retain traditional models of hierarchical control. This is because of the numerous contextual changes that occur as social innovations move from place to place - one leader simply cannot be in every context. There are practical limitations of time (24/7) and geography which means that leadership itself has to scale.

In addition, there is the issue of the breadth of skills necessary to lead organisations that are becoming more complex. In the previous sections of this thematic brief we have stressed:

- On a sustainable business model: *“to have someone on the team (who may or may not be the innovator) with the right knowledge and skills to develop a mission aligned business model”*.
- On quality and scaling: *“quality can only be sustained if the people we work with share the same passion for making a difference and share the same understanding of the outcomes we seek”*.
- On technology and data: *“you need someone on your team (working for you!) who understands technology, can speak the language, and has data management skills”*.

Each of these areas requires leadership and it will be a rare social entrepreneur who is an expert in all three. But the success of this leadership depends not just on specialism (eg. in finance, quality or data), but in the ability to bring all three dimensions (and others) together, collaboratively - to create a mission aligned organisation.

⚠ HELP! - can anyone offer some advice/examples that tackle the developing world challenges of leadership?

b) Recognise that your role has changed

The transition to scale nearly always results in a change of role for our innovators who need to **address and be realistic about the challenge of role change (personally) and the new skills building that is necessary as a result**. The nature of an innovators work and focus changes as the size of the organisation grows. If nothing else, the need to work through and with others grows. Our innovators talk about *“learning to*

look beyond personal experiences to the wisdom of others”.

In moments of self-reflection, our innovators recognise this change. They talk about friends and coaches who have helped in this transition. They sometimes talk about their loss of connection to the ‘grass-roots’ work which motivated them to get involved in the first place and from which they derive much personal energy. They seek a new balance which retains this connection to the front line work which they know to be so important in social entrepreneurship, but now for new and different reasons. They are energised by new challenges and recognise the skill building that is necessary, personally, to address them.

c) Share and discuss evidence

Making decisions that are evidence informed is a key part of leadership according to our innovators. Combined with the ideas of collaborative leadership in the previous section, that means that **evidence has to be shared, discussed and used by the team to drive decision making, not just collected, saved or considered by an individual.**

When evidence is discussed, people challenge assumptions, ask new questions, seek further data, and explore new avenues and unfamiliar topics. A range of formal and informal data, quantitative and qualitative can cause this to happen. Creating a culture of sharing and discussing evidence is not a quick fix; but, in time, it will help to drive better decision making and stronger leadership commitment to those decisions.



COMMENTARY: Observations on Good Practice 4

What have been your 'Abachaa' moments that have helped you to become a better leader in the transition to scale?

Your Comments *(please type directly in this box)*

[Type here]

CONCLUSION: Foster the distributed, collaborative leadership to align the operating model with the mission

When we write a thematic brief, we don't have a predetermined answer or conclusion. This is a bottom-up process by which we aim to harvest the experiences of the innovator community, play it back, reflect and then draw conclusions. So, having described the discussions that happened, what are the core points to be gleaned from this broad range of topics so far? Two things stand out (so far):

1. DEVELOP AND INTEGRATE THE OPERATING MODELS AROUND THE MISSION AND VALUES OF THE ORGANISATION

Aligning (and continuing to refine the alignment of) business models, data/technology and quality delivery models from an early stage is critical for a truly scalable ECD innovation. Being very good at any one of these is not sufficient - they are intertwined and there needs to be an equilibrium established, from the earliest time possible. The integrating force should be the mission, values and core activities of the organisation (usually in ECD with the well-being of children at the centre). Successful integration will require careful decision making, testing, learning and refinements in multiple contexts

... which requires ...

2. FOSTERING DISTRIBUTED, COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Leadership needs to be one of the first things to scale. You need people with the expertise and skills to address the challenges of the various operating models who collaborate and lead together, focused on delivering the mission and values of the organisation. Good innovators can be the catalyst for this to happen, but always leading with others.

We hope that our summary provokes you to act - either in your own organisation or by sharing another perspective/idea in this document. Go forth and bake cakes!



COMMENTARY: Overall Observations

Your Comments *(please type directly in this box)*

[Type here]

APPENDIX B: Experience sharing

This summary table is designed to help you make connections with other innovators who have faced the same opportunities and challenges that you see in your work.

	Good practice themes	Org name	Org name	Org name
1	Focus on the core; don't get distracted.			
	A business mindset: sooner the better.	GW Foundation		
	The children don't pay! So who does?			
	Don't only worry about costs; get the pricing right too.			
	A sustainable business model looks to the future.			
2	People are the key ingredient.			
	Quality, scale and financial sustainability are interdependent.			
	Align data and outcomes to facilitate quality dialogues.			
	It's critical to scale trust and empathy, not just systems and processes.			
	Resist the race to scale until you are ready.	Tiny Totos		
3	You need someone who speaks IT.			

	Focus on the outcomes, not the technology.			
	Don't develop tech unless you need to.			
	Data comes with responsibility			
4	Foster distributed, collaborative leadership.	aeioTU, Ubongo		
	Recognise that your role has changed.			
	Share and discuss evidence.			

APPENDIX C: Vignettes

A vignette is a “brief evocative description, account, or episode” that demonstrates the challenges and success of your work. We are looking for short, concrete, real-life experiences (~200 words) to illustrate each of the good practices identified in this brief.

Please add the Vignette text below and mention which good practice it illustrates. We will incorporate it in the body of the text shortly ...

[type here]