

Scaling Community of Practice: Strategy 2024-2033



1. Introduction

The international Scaling Community of Practice (SCoP) is a network of development and climate change professionals who are working to achieve impact at scale. It hosted its inaugural workshop in February 2015, where a group of 45 invited participants agreed to establish the SCoP as a platform for sharing scaling experience and learning across sectors. The CoP's mission is to integrate, distill and consolidate scaling expertise with a view to improving the quality of scaling efforts and encouraging more development and climate actors to adopt a scaling mindset and best practices.

Today, the SCoP has grown to over 4,000 members from around the world. This growth is a testament to the value that the SCoP provides to its members. It is also indicative of the growing interest in scaling. The idea of developing more scalable and sustainable interventions has moved beyond the "early adopters" and is now attracting broader mainstream interest. The SCoP is poised to play an important role in accelerating this transition.

This document lays out a vision how the SCoP should grow and change to meet the needs of the development and climate fields¹. The SCoP will continue to serve the growing need for scaling expertise by strengthening members' capacity for scaling. It will also help to create an evidence-based, field-tested knowledge base to support the discipline of scaling. Finally, the SCoP will intensify its efforts to be a strong and consistent advocate for scaling.

To date, the SCoP has been an entirely voluntary initiative with no formal staff or organization. It has now outgrown this informal, voluntary structure. A dedicated staff

The international Scaling Community of Practice (SCoP) is a community of development and climate professionals who are working to achieve impact at scale. This community is:

- Cross-sectoral
- Cross-topic
- Global

The SCoP *connects, informs* and *empowers* development and climate change actors to implement scalable and sustainable interventions and to adopt the policies and practices needed to support scaling. It does this by:

- Facilitating sharing and cross-fertilization of ideas and best practices across sectors;
- Developing and disseminating scaling knowledge and best practices; and
- Promoting a scaling mindset and effective scaling practices for development and climate interventions.

The SCoP has over 4000 members representing more than 400 organizations in some 70 countries around the world.

¹ Parts of this document was prepared with support from the [Center for Nonprofit Strategies](#)



is required to accomplish the SCoP's work in a timely fashion, keep the growing membership engaged, and communicate consistently with the field. Even more importantly, staff assistance will reduce the burden on volunteers so that their time and expertise can be leveraged for maximum impact. Along with program enhancements, this document lays out briefly how we envisage to transform the organizational structure and the funding model to accomplish the SCoP's mission.

2. SCoP Activities So Far

The SCoP functions as a platform to facilitate sharing of ideas across sectors and topics; it distills these ideas and discussions into informative knowledge products; and it promotes a scaling mindset and practices among funders and implementing organizations. It accomplishes these objectives via five main programs.

Annual Workshops/Forums

Beginning with the inaugural workshop in 2015, the SCoP has held in-person two-day workshops in 2016, 2017, and 2019, and virtual workshops in 2020, 2021 and 2023. In 2024, the SCoP transformed these workshops into an Annual Forum. Over 900 participants from 70 countries attended the 2023 Forum, which met in three plenary sessions and nine working group sessions. This event featured 47 panelists and moderators, many of them from the Global South. Summaries of these discussions were widely disseminated via subsequent SCoP Newsletters and recordings of the workshop sessions were shared via the SCoP website.

The Annual Workshops and Forums provide a valuable opportunity for members to share their work and learn from each other, and to formulate and discuss scaling best practices. Going forward, there is an immense opportunity to leverage the interest in this event to promote investment in scaling, especially by funders and governments. We aim to continue to increase the number of attendees and to sharpen our focus on “what it takes” to scale and how to evaluate scaling efforts. In the process, we will continue to build feature participation and leadership by scaling experts from the global south.

Working Group Meetings

Much of the organization's work is conducted by its thematic and sectoral “working groups” which are charged with exchanging scaling experience in their respective areas of interest. They are headed by (co)Chairs who are senior thought leaders in their fields and represent a wide range of donors, INGOs and development agencies. Working groups meet virtually on a monthly or quarterly basis. They feature presentations and discussions of particular experiences of scaling and of scaling challenges in their specific field or sector and to move towards consensus regarding tools, effective practices and standards. Working groups have dedicated pages on the SCoP Website, where they post group and member news and publications.

Working Groups are established based on a demand-driven basis The SCoP's 10 current working



groups are: Agriculture and Rural Development, Health, Education, Nutrition, Youth Employment, Climate Change, Social Enterprise, Monitoring and Evaluation, Scaling in Fragile States, and Mainstreaming Scaling in Funder Organizations.

The Working Group Chairs have considerable leeway to determine the program for their groups. Going forward, our goal is to free these volunteers from the more mundane administrative tasks to make better use of their time, energy and expertise. Having staff support to help plan and coordinate activities will allow these respected thought-leaders to play a more valuable role as knowledge generators, networkers, and advocates for scaling. Working group members can and do also collaborate to design or commission specific thought leadership products or reports; make presentations on scaling to donors and at industry conferences; and participate jointly in scaling projects.

Newsletters

The SCoP issues quarterly newsletters that are circulated to members and posted on the SCoP Website. These newsletters (28 to date) contain information from the Executive Committee, from and about working groups, members' news, and information about recent and upcoming publications and events relevant to scaling. The newsletters are an important device to keep our members engaged and to help them feel like they are part of an innovative, vibrant and collaborative community. They are widely shared broadly by members with others in their organizations and serve as a touchstone for those engaged in, or interested in, scaling. Cumulatively, they also represent a rich source of information on the evolving world of scaling research and practice.

Knowledge Products

Starting in 2020, the ExCom decided to invest in developing reports and briefings that address cross-cutting issues and questions of concern to the entire membership. After an in-depth review and several interviews with key scaling experts, the SCoP released an issues paper that identified high-priority cross-cutting issues for the scaling community. To date, the SCoP has taken a deep dive into four seminal issues raised in that report:

- Principles of scaling: what works (or doesn't)
- The relationship between scaling and systems change
- How to institutionalize new policies and practices in host governments
- How to mainstream scaling considerations among donor organizations (ongoing)

The ideas and findings of these deep dives were distilled in knowledge products (issues papers, working papers, blogs, etc.) and then posted on our website and disseminated via webinars. The resulting reports provide a rigorous, yet eminently practical, summary of the best thinking in our field.



Website and Social Media

The SCoP maintains a dedicated website (www.scalingcommunityofpractice.com) where the ExCom, its working groups and members post knowledge products, recordings of webinars and other events, announcements regarding the SCoP's activities, news, events, etc. The website also offers opportunities to post announcements and documentation by its members, and offers links to other scaling initiatives. Currently, the website primarily houses working papers, blogs, videos and reports created by members of the SCoP. Going forward, the website will be developed into a comprehensive, curated, one-stop-shop for scaling resources and a calendar of events and opportunities in the field. Plans are also underway to dramatically increase the SCoP's social media presence.

3. The Way Forward

Building on the SCoP's experience over last 9 years and especially the experience with the mainstreaming action-research initiative, a clearer mission, vision and pathway has emerged for the SCoP.

A More Action-Oriented Mission Focused on Changing the Practices of Funders, Governments, and Implementers

Current project-driven approaches to development and climate action are too small, too slow, too short-lived, and often not flexible enough to be sustained, adapted and expanded to deliver population-level benefits. Achieving the ambitious targets established by the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Climate Agenda will require a major shift in practices from the prevailing project-driven focus to one that fully reflects a scaling mindset. The Mission of the SCoP seeks to catalyze the shift to a scaling approach in funding, host government, research and third-party implementing organizations in the development and climate fields, and to support the professionals in those organizations working to implement these changes.

The Vision

The vision of the SCoP is to reach a tipping point over the next 10 years in achieving its mission of assuring that a systematic approach to scaling is the default option for all development actors in designing and implementing development solutions.

The Pathway

In addition to continuing and deepening its current activities, the SCoP plans to embark on a major effort to advocate for and promote changed practices, beginning with funder organizations.

We plan to pursue a three-step pathway over the next 10 years to achieve our vision:

Step 1 – Working with funder organizations (2023-25)

In an effort to be evidence-based and to promote change from within, in 2023, the SCoP embarked on a new, two-year [“action-research” initiative](#) designed to work with a range of development funder organizations to establish whether and how they have mainstreamed scaling into their



operational activities. This initiative is designed as an effort to collect information and lessons on funder scaling practices for the benefit of the funder partners and the membership of the SCoP at large. As the work under this initiative proceeded, it became clear that the emerging findings also offer an opportunity for the SCoP to pursue its mission by advocating and providing support for funders to integrate a systematic approach to sustainable scaling into their operational practices.

By March 2024, this initiative had produced 12 case studies of funder journeys to mainstream scaling in their operational approaches and an interim synthesis report on preliminary findings and lessons. We also did deep dives on funding institutions in the agriculture and education sectors.

The organizations featured in 2023 include major multilateral and bilateral donors, private foundations, innovation research institutions, vertical funds and INGOs. During 2024 and early 2025, we expect to complete a number of additional case studies focusing particular attention on foundations and vertical funds, and to do a deep dive on funder in the health sector.

Key outputs for Step 1 will be:

- Case study reports for 30 funder partners and 3 reports on crosscutting perspectives by sector (agriculture, education, health) and by type of funder organization (vertical funds, challenge funds, etc.)
- A report on the recipient perspective
- A report on progress in incorporating scaling into OECD/MOPAN and funder organization evaluation practices
- Annual synthesis reports of findings and lessons
- Tools for tracking progress in mainstreaming scaling in funder organizations
- A proactive outreach campaign to disseminate and discuss the lessons from the work on mainstreaming scaling in funder organizations
- Growth of SCoP membership from 4000 to 5000 members

The outcomes for Step 1 will be:

- Significant progress in mainstreaming of scaling in at least 20 funder organizations
- Mainstreaming scaling in OECD/MOPAN development principles and evaluation practices
- CoP Membership exceeds 5000 and incorporates increasingly diversified leadership

Step 2 – Working in addition with key stakeholders in developing countries (2025-2028)

Building on the experience under Step 1 and its prior work [on institutionalizing scaling in governments](#), the SCoP will support selected countries in mainstreaming scaling into key policy and implementing institutions including government bodies, commercial and social enterprises, NGOs, and academic and thinktank institutions. One of the key aspects of the work will be to identify and strengthen local intermediary institutions that can support other actors in pursuing a proactive scaling approach. The SCoP will work in partnership with academic and think tank institutions in the Global South and North and with key funder organizations to realize this program. As in the case of Step 1, the approach will be one of “action-research” involving close cooperation with and ownership of the research process by the partner organizations.

Work will continue on expanding the reach of the SCoP’s partnerships with funder organizations to



ensure continued expansion and deepening of mainstreaming the scaling agenda among funder organizations. The work will increasingly focus on ascertaining the results of mainstreaming efforts in terms of actual scaling practice and its results in terms of improved sustainable development outcomes at scale.

Key outputs for this step will be:

- Case studies for 25 countries, covering the mainstreaming of scaling in key stakeholder organizations, including domestic intermediary organizations
- 10 additional case studies of mainstreaming in funder organizations and five reports on cross-cutting assessments of scaling by funder type (research funders, challenge funds, vertical funds, bilateral funders, and multilateral development banks), by sector (education, health, infrastructure, etc.) and/or by type of organization (public, commercial, social enterprise, etc.)
- Annual synthesis progress reports
- Tools for tracking mainstreaming of scaling in implementing organizations and for measuring impact in terms of sustainable outcomes at scale.
- A proactive outreach campaign to disseminate and discuss the lessons from the work on mainstreaming scaling in country organizations
- Growth of SCoP membership from 5000 to 10,000

Key outcomes for Step 2:

- Progress with mainstreaming of scaling in governments, private sectors and social enterprises in at least 10 countries as measured by the tracking tool(s)
- Continued mainstreaming of scaling in 30 funder organizations as measured by the funder tracking tool
- CoP Membership exceeds 10,000 with leadership centered in the global South

Step 3 – Mainstreaming scaling as a key element of global development goals and the global development effectiveness agenda (2028-2033)

The implementation period for the SDGs will come to an end in 2030. It can be expected that during 2028-2029 there will be global efforts to develop a new set of global development goals, building on the experience with the MDGs and SDGs. In parallel, an effort should be made to revive, update and intensify the global development effectiveness agenda (of the High-Level Meetings in Paris, Nairobi and Busan). The SCoP's work during Step 3 will work on assuring that the next global development goals and the global development agenda include a central focus on the systematic pursuit of sustainable impact at scale.

The SCoP's activities and corresponding outputs will include:

- continued work with funder partners and developing country partners in assuring that they fully mainstream scaling into their operations
- engagement with and support for the high-level forums and working groups that will set the agendas for the next global development goals and for the revived development effectiveness agenda



Key outcomes of Step 3:

- Scaling will be mainstreamed in the majority of funder organizations and will be the default option for a range of domestic stakeholders in developing countries
- Scaling will be fully mainstreamed in the next global development goals and in the development effectiveness agenda.

Theory of Change

The diagram on the next page shows how the SCoP’s activities work together to accomplish its near-term goals and longer-term impact. The SCoP connects scaling experts and their organizations, develops and disseminates knowledge, and promotes a scaling mindset and practices across development and climate change fields and topics. It also seeks to broaden the constituencies within funders and practitioners, including those in the Global South, to help shape the scaling agenda. This cross-sectoral, cross-topic, and cross-country sharing of ideas, experience and knowledge will help consolidate and advance the field, while creating more demand for scaling expertise. As more organizations—especially funders and governments—adopt a scaling mindset and more scaling experts come to the fore, more climate and development interventions will be implemented at scale to yield population-level benefits.

4. Organizational Structure and Governance

Since its founding in 2015, the SCoP has been an informal, volunteer-based network. It is housed at Management Systems International (MSI), but it is independent of MSI or any other organization. Founding members Larry Cooley and Johannes Linn lead the initiative and provide overall direction and management of programs. The community has organized itself into sectoral/thematic “working groups” that share scaling experiences in their areas of interest. Working Group Chairs are eminent leaders in their fields and have considerable leeway in setting the program agenda for their groups¹. The SCoP is governed by a 24-person Executive Committee (ExCom), which consists of the Working Group Chairs and representatives of seven member organizations that make a financial contribution to the community².

This current informal structure is self-limiting and unsustainable because of the burden it places on the volunteers and the limits it places on what the SCoP can do. Moreover, the current structure relies heavily on the voluntary efforts of the founders—Larry Cooley and Johannes Linn—and limits the potential for succession planning.

¹ For a list the organizations represented by the Working Group Co-Chairs see Annex 1.

² See Section 5. For a list the organizations that have provides funding see Annex 2.



Scaling Community of Practice: Theory of Change



We therefore plan to gradually transition the SCoP into a formal organization with a small staff (initially part-time) that will leverage the efforts of our members to grow the reach and impact of the network. The most practical option to achieve this is to embed the SCoP within a well-situated organization that will integrate the SCoP as a major, identifiable sets of activities under its roof. In addition to providing continuity, this will benefit from the managerial, administrative and fund-raising capacities of the host organization, lowering costs, and maximizing synergies. Potential host organizations include well-established think tanks, do tanks, technical assistance providers, or centers at academic institutions.

The expectation is that the SCoP will remain a network of experts and practitioners, and a platform for creating and sharing knowledge, fostering partnerships, and engaging in advocacy for mainstreaming scaling. However, the business model of the SCoP, which so far has relied heavily on volunteer engagement, will have to shift towards the business model of the host organization, most likely involving continued volunteer work (in the working groups and possible advisory bodies), but increasingly relying on grant funded or fee-for-service professional work, with funding raised through (a) dedicated core resource mobilization from key donors, (b) funding by assisted organizations, and (c) in-kind contributions from member organizations.

5. Funding

For the first five years of its existence the SCoP did not seek any financial contributions. Since the SCoP started accepting funding in 2019, we have raised a total of USD \$637 thousand in cash, and USD \$165 thousand kind. These funds were devoted mostly to support consulting support for our knowledge work, to cover the logistical costs of the Annual Workshops, and a limited amount of administrative support provided by Management Systems International. The expected funding required for the first five years (2024-2028) of our vision and pathway above is likely to be in the range of USD 4-5 million divided between core funding and project specific funding.

