

MAINSTREAMING SCALING INITIATIVE

The Mainstreaming Tracker - Tool Summary

*A tool for assessing and managing the adoption of
systematic approaches to scale by development funders*

Richard Kohl and Larry Cooley

March 2025



The Mainstreaming Tracker

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A tool for assessing and managing the adoption of systematic approaches to scale by development funders

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Commissioned by and prepared for
the Scaling Community of Practice

www.scalingcommunityofpractice.com



This tool can help users:

1. Assess the current state of mainstreaming scaling within organizations of interest.
2. Set organizational goals for mainstreaming scaling.
3. Monitor progress towards mainstreaming scaling within organizations of interest.
4. Develop strategies to mainstream scaling within organizations of interest.
5. Communicate progress towards mainstreaming scaling to governance bodies, funders, and other stakeholders.
6. Promote a shared understanding and vision of the process of mainstreaming scaling among internal actors and external stakeholders.



HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

This tool is organized around 13 elements of mainstreaming scaling, with five stages of mainstreaming presented for each of the 13 elements. Users are encouraged to first review the tool and consider its application to their specific organizational context. They may modify the elements or stages to fit their needs. They are then encouraged to consider each element individually, in the order that feels most approachable. For each element, users should consider which stage of mainstreaming their organization has achieved and, more importantly, why such a score was assigned. Users may also wish to consider what steps would be necessary to move their organization to the next stage. It is highly recommended that such a review be implemented as a participatory, group, self-assessment exercise.

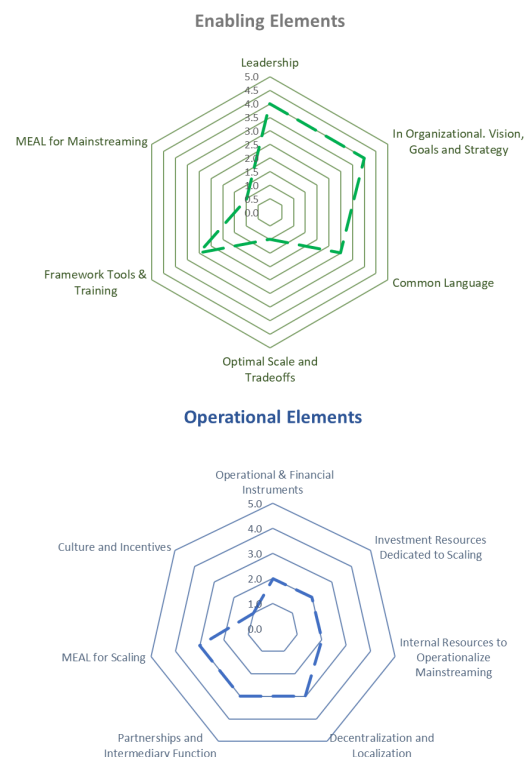
For ease of review, it is suggested that users divide the elements into two sections – Enabling Elements (the first 6 elements) and Operational Elements (elements 7-13).

The final outputs of an exercise using this tool could be:

1. A set of Radar Diagrams showing the organization’s progress towards mainstreaming scaling.
2. A document explaining the assigned scores.

3. A list of concrete steps (ideally no more than 10) the organization can take in order to move to the next stages of mainstreaming scaling

Figure 1: Example Radar Diagrams produced by using this tool





In Fall 2023, the Scaling Community of Practice (SCoP) launched a three-year action research initiative to study how organizations working in international development, principally funders, mainstream systematic approaches to supporting sustainable outcomes at scale – a “Mainstreaming Initiative.” In the course of this effort, it became clear that organizations interested in mainstreaming scaling could benefit from tools to support those efforts. In that context, the SCoP decided to commission a Mainstreaming Tracking Tool (MTT). The background paper presenting summarizing that effort and the rationale for the proposed Tool can be found [here](#).

The MTT proposed in this paper is made up of an assessment matrix incorporating key elements of mainstreaming, each with five stages of progress from No Mainstreaming to Full Mainstreaming. The matrix is composed of six framing and enabling elements and seven operational and implementation elements. The five stages for each element contain criteria for assessing where an organization is in the progression towards Full Mainstreaming. The elements and criteria were derived principally from three sources: the SCoP’s work on scaling principles and practices, factors identified as important to mainstreaming by the mainstreaming case studies and synthesis paper, and similar tools found in the international development literature, particularly institutionalization trackers for scaling itself.

The MTT is designed and intended to be used by funding organizations – official donors, foundations, vertical funds, and impact investors – working in international development regardless of the countries and sectors in which they work. Other international development organizations may find it of interest as well. It can be applied either as an internal self-assessment exercise or by external evaluators. In the former case, we recommend that this be done in a workshop setting with professional facilitation and broad internal participation.

To the best of our knowledge, the MTT is the first tool designed to track and assess progress in mainstreaming scaling. By comparison, institutionalization trackers for scaling are used to assess progress in integrating specific innovations or intervention into permanent institutions at large scale.





THE MAINSTREAMING TRACKING TOOL

Elements	Stages				
	No Mainstreaming (outside of the organization)	Low Mainstreaming (on the periphery of the organization)	Emerging Mainstreaming (somewhere in the organization)	Significant Mainstreaming (at center of the organization)	Fully Mainstreamed (intrinsic to the organization)
1. Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling not explicitly mentioned or articulated by senior leadership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is at least one champion or focal person who supports mainstreaming at the senior level Discussions are underway, but leadership has not pushed for integration into strategy, operations, or resource allocation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership (CEO/ED/DG) speaks publicly about mainstreaming both internally and externally May have gaps in continuity or duration One of many priorities; not central to mission Has pushed for integration into strategy, but has not allocated resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strong, explicit support over multiple years for the importance of scaling from leadership Has pushed for integration into strategy and operationalization Has assigned middle management responsible for integration Spent significant political capital 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Leadership has stated that it is a central priority; “mission critical” Leadership has allocated resources to support operationalization Middle management is fully engaged Continuity of leadership focus assured in the event of change in leadership
2. Common Language for Scaling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No approved definitions of scale and scaling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational definitions of scale and scaling under development Tend towards more transactional definition of scaling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational definitions of scale and scaling developed and approved Common lexicon emerging among a growing number of staff Contains some or all elements of transformational scaling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Common definitions and lexicon used and understood by majority of middle management and staff Contains most elements of transformational scaling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definition and lexicon universally used and understood Contains all elements of transformational scaling, including systems change



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3. Optimal Scale; Equity and Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implicit approach, if any, to scaling maximizes only numbers, places, or reach 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Growing, if informal, recognition that there are trade-offs between size/reach and other objectives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Widespread recognition that there are tradeoffs with other goals: access, equity, inclusion, sustainability, impact No leadership, guidance, or tools on making such tradeoffs Scaling remains an unfunded mandate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance and tools exist on how to approach tradeoffs Middle management and staff expected to make such tradeoffs explicit Small but growing evidence of tradeoffs being made in project cycle, country or sector strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political support from senior management for middle management and staff to make hard choices Widespread implementation of guidance and tools on how to approach tradeoffs
4. Organizational Vision, Goals, and Strategy (overall)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling not mentioned in vision or mission statements or organizational strategy No scaling goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling is mentioned explicitly and multiple times in at least one of vision or mission statements or organizational strategy Explicit scaling goals are under development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational vision includes sustainable impact at large scale; success defined in terms of development outcomes and size of the problem An explicit organizational change strategy for mainstreaming is under development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Frequently mentioned, chapter or fully integrated into organizational multi-year strategies Has set qualitative or quantitative goals Implementation of organizational development strategy has made some progress (early adopters) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluation/ Accountability mechanisms exist for tracking mainstreaming goals and strategy Organizational change strategy has been implemented widely with ownership and buy in from middle management and staff
5. Analytic Framework, Tools, and Knowledge Products for Scaling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No scaling framework, tools or knowledge products 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytic framework exists or is under development Not wide awareness, understanding or use of the analytic framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytic framework exists with broad awareness and understanding Tools and guidance for scaling under development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analytic framework and tools exist and reflect good scaling practices Broad awareness and understanding of framework and tools Utilization among early adopters 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge products such as case studies and cross-case studies of scaling are being produced regularly



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6. Mechanisms for Tracking Mainstreaming Goals and Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No MEAL indicators or tracking of mainstreaming is done or in place 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Progress on mainstreaming is reported qualitatively in annual reports and multi-year strategies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MEAL framework and indicators for mainstreaming are under development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MEAL framework and indicators are in place MEAL of mainstreaming is being rolled out, covers some of the organization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MEAL of mainstreaming conducted regularly Tracking feeds into an accountability process
7. Operational Instruments, Policies, and Processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling criteria are not present in any phases of project/grantmaking cycle or selection criteria, including post-project financial and implementation sustainability Financial instruments are not designed to support scaling Systems strengthening and addressing enabling conditions either are not included in projects or are not linked to scaling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling is built into some project or grant designs and selection criteria, OR Selected projects are scaled based on success and windows of opportunity, but not systematically 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling criteria have been introduced in some phases of project/grantmaking cycle, e.g., design, QA/QI Some scaling is now built-in from the beginning, but most are still follow-up projects Programmatic or other instruments consistent with the time frame and adaptive nature of scaling may exist, or under development, but are not yet used or widely used for scaling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Scaling criteria have been introduced in all phases of project/grantmaking cycle, e.g., design, QA/QI Scaling is systematically built in from the beginning Appropriate programmatic approaches and financial instruments are increasingly used to support scaling Post-project sustainability increasingly integrated into design and implementation; including systems changes and capacity building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explicitly integrates systems change and addressing enabling conditions integrated into project design and integration Flexibility allowed in implementation and grant design using adaptive management Appropriate programmatic, multi-phase approaches and multi-tranche financial instruments are widely and properly used



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8. Dedicated Share of Portfolio, Financial Resources to Fund Scaling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is no dedicated funding to support scaling There are no targets for the share of the portfolio intended to achieve impact at scale 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a small amount of funding for scaling available on a pilot basis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strategy exists to grow scaling funding over the medium-term Portfolio tracking system exists for investment progress 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There are significant financial resources dedicated explicitly for purposes of scaling Resources are available throughout the entire organization Resources are sufficient to incentivize scaling Portfolio tracking covers a large share of total investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sufficient funding is available for all projects/grants with scaling potential Portfolio tracking covers most or all investments Impact at scale is expected from the majority of projects/grants Progress in moving towards scale used as input into investment decisions
9. Technical and Budget Resources for Internal, Organizational Costs of Scaling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No unit or staff who provide technical support for scaling to operational divisions No funding to support mainstreaming scaling No training for staff in scaling frameworks or tools if they exist 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A unit or individual(s) who provide(s) support for scaling, but there is limited demand Scaling competes with other cross-cutting objectives for staff time and attention, staff are overloaded No funding or training to support mainstreaming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training is available for a small number of staff interested in scaling Small but growing number of staff use training/support Funding is available for pilot efforts in mainstreaming for specific countries or divisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A unit/staff providing technical support and/or a diverse cadre of scaling advisors embedded in most operational units Some budget to support mainstreaming, full funding being rolled out in medium term Widely available training in scaling for staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical support or embedded advisors throughout Sufficient time, effort, and funding are available for all operational units to integrate scaling into their work



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10. Decentralization and Localization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No phases of project cycle or implementation integrate local views or voice Local consultations, if they exist, are pro forma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project cycle does not integrate local views and voice Local partners are involved in implementation, but have no input into adaptive management May have a local presence and consultations, but it is temporary and for project purposes only Mainstreaming is being adopted by a few divisions, sectors or countries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local partners have some input into setting project/grant goals, design, and review Local partners play a significant role in implementation, have input into adaptive management Scaling has been successfully mainstreamed in some of the organization Ongoing local presence in some countries or regional hubs; decision making still rests largely in headquarters MEAL is mostly oriented to external actors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project goals, design, review, and approval co-created with local partners Ongoing local presence in majority of countries or regions with significant decision-making autonomy Local partners lead implementation; external actors mostly provide short-term technical assistance Joint local/external MEAL 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Local actors lead project/grant cycle Local actors largely implement MEAL



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11. Partnerships and Intermediary Function	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most investments are solo efforts • Partners play minor roles in implementation • Organization does not play intermediary role • No strategy for handoffs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Almost all partnerships are transactional • Actively pursues co-funding opportunities for some investments • Partners play an important but subsidiary role in implementation • Handoffs occur but not systematically; pilot efforts at intermediary/ handoffs underway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships seen as central to achieving organizational goals; integrated into strategy • Partnership strategy is being rolled out • Partnerships mixed between transactional and transformational • Partners lead implementation • Beginning to play or fund intermediary role • Handoff strategy is under development, or being piloted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships majority and growing share of total transactions • Majority of partnerships are transformational • Works as an intermediary, or funds intermediary work for small but growing share of activities • Has an explicit handoff strategy for most activities • Funds, supports, and/or uses country platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intermediary and handoff strategies funded and in place for all scalable activities • Nearly all partnerships are transformational; seen as long-term, enduring even if phased in practice • Assesses time, effort, and resource requirements for partnership commitments; used as input into decision making
12. Integrated into MEAL	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No MEAL frameworks or indicators relevant to transformational scaling • May measure size of impact at project end, focuses on outputs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEAL frameworks, indicators and guidance for scaling are being developed and piloted • Existing or new MEAL approaches remain focused on outputs, short-term, reach, and only direct beneficiaries (transactional) • Primarily focuses on accountability and evaluation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEAL frameworks and indicators for transformational scaling are under development, or are being piloted • Coverage expands beyond evaluation and accountability to tracking progress in scaling and support scaling decisions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MEAL frameworks, guidance, and indicators for transformational scaling are widely used for all aspects of scaling, including adaptive management 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learning is a major goal of MEAL • MEAL integrates optimal scaling decisions • Localization is integrated into MEAL approaches and implementation • MEAL for and of mainstreaming is in place and widely used



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13. Organizational Culture, Incentives, and Measures of Success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational culture and incentives focus on the number of project approvals, timely disbursements, and outputs achieved Success is defined and measured in number of projects/grants completed on time with at least “moderate success” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organizational culture and incentives support transactional scaling: more resources, projects and the scale of impact Measures of success have been adapted accordingly 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Definitions of success are shifting to transformational scaling Organizational culture and informal incentives are beginning to embody scaling as central to the organization; individuals see scaling as the future Culture interacts with the development of scaling definitions, tools, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transformational scaling is increasingly integrated into individual, unit, and division KPIs, and organizational definitions of success The alignment of scaling KPIs with scaling into MEAL, project cycle is underway 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human resource policies (promotion, salary) incentivize transformational scaling Transformational scaling is fully reflected in organizational, division, and staff understandings of success Positive status based on success in achieving transformational scaling

Notes: ED – Executive Director; DG – Director General; MEAL – monitoring, evaluation, accountability, and learning; QA/QI – quality assurance / quality improvement; HQ – headquarters; STTA – short-term technical assistance; KPIs – key performance indicators





This tool is part of a larger initiative undertaken by the Scaling Community Practice on Mainstreaming Scaling in Funder Organizations. The “**Mainstreaming Initiative**” has three purposes:

1. To inform the Community of Practice members and the wider development community of the current state of support for and operationalization of scaling in a broad range of development funding agencies.
2. To draw lessons for future efforts to mainstream the scaling agenda in the development funding community.
3. To promote more effective funder support for scaling by stakeholders in developing countries.

Through the Mainstreaming Initiative, it became clear that organizations interested in mainstreaming scaling could benefit from tools to support those efforts. In that context, the Scaling Community of Practice commissioned a Mainstreaming Tracking Tool. This brief presents a shortened version of the **full report** on the development and use of the Mainstreaming Tracking Tool.

Key concepts

Intermediary function – Serving as a facilitator of partnerships and relationships, without providing the services directly. This can involve providing introductions, convening key stakeholders, facilitating handoffs, and / or funding time for partnership and collaboration.

Mainstreaming scaling – Systematically integrating the pursuit of sustainable outcomes at scale into organizational objectives, strategies, business models, operations, resource allocation, managerial and staff mindsets, and incentives

Transactional scaling - An approach to scaling that focuses on “doing more”: more, bigger projects with more money or greater resources to cover more locations, people, or both.

Transformational scaling – An approach to scaling that focuses on creating the enabling conditions to scale through a sequence of projects or a programmatic approaches where systems change and greater scale proceed in a synergistic and iterative fashion.

Scale – Sustainable impact that addresses a significant share of a global or regional need, demand, or problem.

Scaling - The process of reaching scale.

