WHAT ARE **PATHWAYS TO IMPACT AT SCALE**?
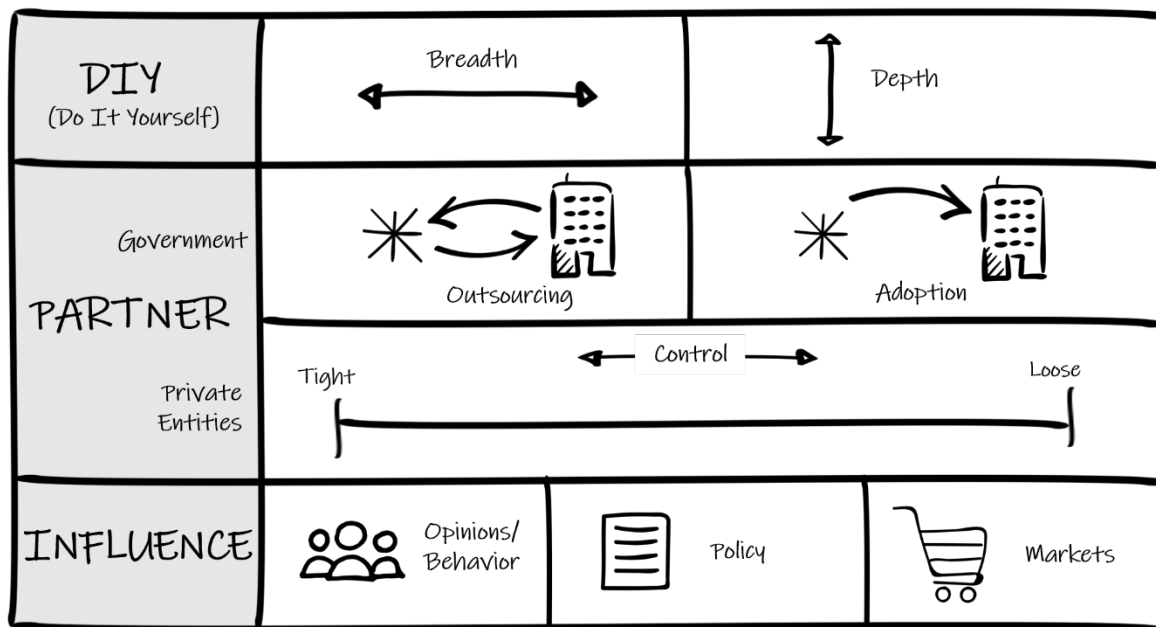
Pathways are the strategies that a nonprofit or for-profit social enterprise can pursue to scale impact. Each pathway – and the range of variations within – can help an enterprise think about its role in the ultimate solution as well as the implications on its operating model, funding, and more.


To achieve **IMPACT at SCALE**, and meet the **size of the problem**, the majority of social enterprises will pursue more than one of the scaling pathways. Not all strategies are right for all social enterprises, and timing matters too – but within these briefs we lay out each strategy alongside examples and implications for implementation, so you can make the best decisions for your organization and for your impact.

LINKS TO PATHWAY BRIEFERS:
1. [DIY (Do It Yourself)](#)
2. [Partnering with Government](#)
3. [Partnering with Private Entities](#)
4. [Influence](#)

1

Scaling Pathway: **DIY (DO IT YOURSELF)**

You doing more, yourself, to achieve more impact
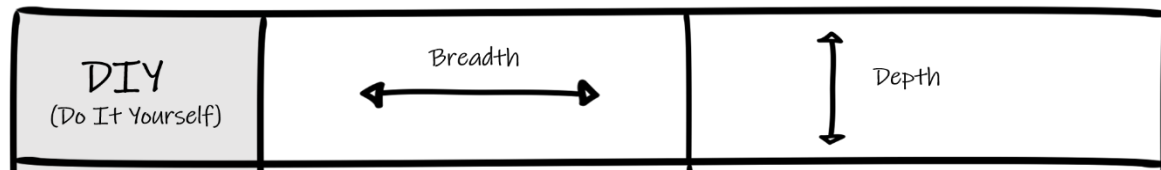
DESCRIPTION

(Also known as growth.) The key here is that your organization is doing the work itself. Should you grow broader by bringing your service or product to more people (e.g., expanding to new geographies or targeting new customer/beneficiary groups)? Should you grow deeper by providing additional value-add services or products to your existing customers?

If this DIY path is successful, you're likely to end up with a larger organization (larger budget, more staff, etc.) and scaling your impact by continuing to grow (broad or deep) while working to decrease costs per unit over time. Note that most enterprises start out with some direct growth to prove their model to key stakeholders, even if they ultimately transition – or add on - to other pathways.

EXAMPLES

DIY Broad Growth: Teach for America

Teach for America, a U.S.-based education social enterprise, has continued to scale its model to new geographic locations – with each expansion hiring new Teach for America staff and adapting to new locations. In 2020, Teach for America served in over 9,000 schools across the U.S., directly supporting its teachers assigned to each. Listen to Teach for America CEO, Elisa Villanueva Beard, discuss the organization's scaling journey here.

DIY Broad & Deep Growth: One Acre Fund

One Acre Fund provides smallholder farmers with a holistic bundle of products and services to boost their productivity and ability to generate income from their crops; the bundles are marketed and supported by local field officers. In scaling deep, One Acre Fund works to reach more farmers in locations where they already operate, and develops new, additional services to provide those farmers. In scaling broad, the enterprise is expanding the geographic areas it serves, with each new geography requiring more field officer staff. Read more about One Acre Fund's scaling journey here.

LIKELY DOERS & PAYERS AT SCALE:
- Doers: The organization itself.
- Payers: Depends on the model; could be customers, philanthropy, a mix.

BEST SUITED FOR:
- Solutions with potential for economies of scale and substantially decreasing unit costs
- Highly complex solutions, where components must be tightly controlled
- Solutions where ownership of brand and credit is important
- Solutions where the need for local adaptation is limited, or there is an efficient process for the organization to achieve necessary local adaptation
- Solutions without clear partners for achieving scale

YOU SHOULD KNOW: Implications when pursuing DIY
- **Resource needs.** Even with economies of scale, direct growth requires significant financial, human capital, and infrastructure resources. Many enterprises also report that a strong organizational culture is critical to the success of the effort. Think carefully about the financial resources needed: will earned revenue realistically meet operational and expansion needs, and at what price point will your target customers be able to pay? Will philanthropic support still be required, and how can that be sustainable?
- **Control**. Direct growth, managed fully by the parent organization, allows for tight control of program outcomes and quality.
- **Pace of growth.** Direct growth (usually) occurs at a slower pace, compared to other pathways such as partnering.
- **Local adaptation.** Given that implementation is led by one organization - which, even if global, cannot be fully immersed in each implementation location - it may be more challenging to adapt the solution to the local context. Organization must also be thoughtful about local hiring, culture, etc.
- **Risk**. The primary organization bears the full risk (financial, reputational, etc.) for implementation and outcomes.

Scaling Pathway: **PARTNERING WITH GOVERNMENT**
You leveraging government's unique assets to create more impact
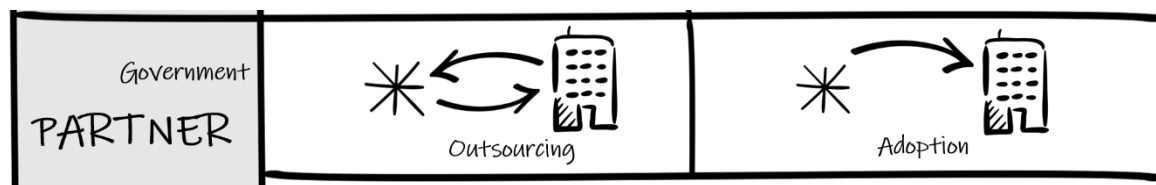
DESCRIPTION

For many social enterprises, partnering with government in some way is an essential strategy for achieving impact, especially when seeking systems-level change. Host-country governments (at the national, regional, and local levels), are a critical part of almost any impact ecosystem—from health to education to economic development and beyond. Governments have many unique assets: networks or infrastructure that can reach citizens in great numbers and at economies of scale; decision-making authority over how resources (financial and beyond) are allocated over the long term; and a deep understanding of community needs and context. For additional insights and advice on partnering with government, see the many articles in [Scaling Pathways: Leveraging Government Partnerships for Scaled Impact](#).

Government partnerships often fall within two categories:
1. **Government Outsourcing.** Government outsources to the enterprise to deliver a product or service through a fee-for-service/product government contract. This can also include scenarios in which the government provides a platform for the social enterprise to deliver a product/service that supplements the government's own service provision (but for which the government does not pay) — either through enabling direct delivery or by formally endorsing a product/service.
2. **Government Adoption.** Government takes on management/implementation of the solution — either fully or partially. In most cases, the parent organization remains in an advisory or technical support role.

1. **Government Outsourcing**

EXAMPLES
Government Outsourcing - [Code for America](#)
The California Department of Social Services contracted social enterprise Code for America to deliver and scale the GetCalFresh program, which improves Californians' ability to

effectively and efficiently access the statewide Food Stamps program. Read more about Code for America's approach here.

Government Outsourcing (Infrastructure) - mothers2mothers
South African social enterprise, mothers2mothers, provides trained "Mentor Mothers" who work within communities and low capacity public health clinics to ensure that women receive important HIV-related health advice and medications. The Mentor Mothers are managed by mothers2mothers, but are able to use government facilities as a platform for program implementation.

LIKELY DOERS & PAYERS AT SCALE:
- Doers: The organization itself.
- Payers: Government budget (and/or aid funds) if outsourcing. If leveraging government infrastructure, the organization will need to determine the payer.

BEST SUITED FOR:
- Organizations with tested and cost-effective solutions
- Organizations offering solutions aligned with government priorities but for which:
  - government does not have the capacity or expertise to directly implement,
  - the solution is highly complex or requires specialized expertise or resources to implement
  - the organization wants to maintain ownership, IP, brand, and/or credit

YOU SHOULD KNOW: Implications when pursuing government outsourcing
- **Organizational capacities.** The organization needs to develop the infrastructure and skills to work with government procurement agencies, and be able to provide required financial and implementation reporting. Don't underestimate this!
- **Financial resilience**. The organization needs to have the funding or working capital to front the product/services given what are often long lead times for payment from the government.
- **Government priorities.** Government priorities can shift as leadership changes, or — really — at any other time. When priorities change, the government could end the outsourcing relationship.
- **Influencing policy.** It's common for the enterprise to work concurrently to change government policy aligned with its specific impact area.
- *If leveraging government infrastructure, keep in mind:*
  - **Relationships**. It is critical to establish close working relationships and formal agreements with government partners overseeing the elements you are leveraging, and also actively running/managing those elements.
  - **Balancing other priorities.** The organization must work within/around the other priorities for the infrastructure it is leveraging.

2. Government Adoption

EXAMPLES

Government Outsourcing (Infrastructure) toward Government Adoption - Healthy Learners

Zambia-based social enterprise, Healthy Learners, is working to improve healthcare for school-age children by working with the government to implement school-based community health. The organization trains and supports teachers (who are already government employees) as community health workers, and is working toward a goal of transitioning management and support of the school health program over to the government.

Government Adoption - VillageReach's Chipatala cha pa Foni (CCPF)

VillageReach worked closely with the Malawi government to develop a toll-free health hotline (CCPF), linking health centers and remote communities. After testing, proving, and scaling the program, VillageReach is transitioning operations to the Malawi Ministry of Health and Population. According to a signed MOU, the government will fully own and operate the service. Read more about VillageReach's government partnerships here.

LIKELY DOERS & PAYERS AT SCALE:

- Doers: Government
- Payers: Government budget (and/or aid funds).

BEST SUITED FOR:

- Solutions highly aligned with government priorities that are lower cost, easier to implement and codify, and — critically — in an area where the government is motivated and engaged.
- Areas where the government's service provision has significant gaps, yet the government is best positioned to deliver the solution in the long-term.

YOU SHOULD KNOW: Implications when pursuing government adoption

- **Solution development.** It's common for enterprises to engage in direct growth for years to test, prove, and model the solution before the government adopts it.
- **Timeline**. It can be a very long process to transition implementation over to government, and requires significant planning and funding.
- **Ongoing support.** Most solutions adopted by government from social enterprises require some level of medium to long-term support from the enterprise.
- **Quality**. Organizations often see a drop in the quality of the implementation as it is taken over by other parties (including government). Many organizations thus have tools to manage quality, and to ensure that any tradeoffs between quality and the increased reach and sustainability are reasonable.
- **Government priorities.** Government priorities can shift as leadership changes, or — really — at any other time. When priorities change, the government could end or change the adoption plan.

Scaling Pathway: **PARTNERING WITH PRIVATE ENTITIES**
You enabling and supporting other private entities to implement your solution and scale impact
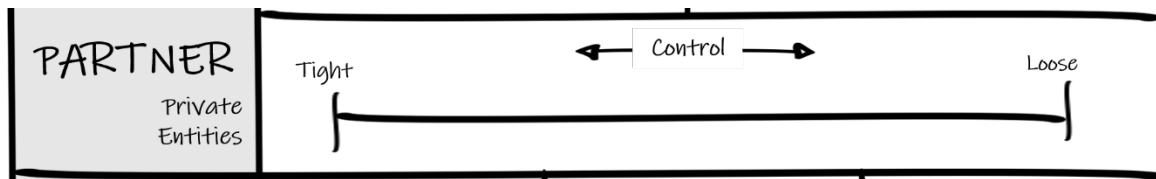
DESCRIPTION
Enabling other private entities (e.g., non-government organizations, civil society organizations, for profits) to implement your solution so as to achieve broader impact. There are many variations here: partnering can fall across a spectrum of control that the primary organization wields over its partners, including more tightly controlled partnerships with clear agreement and expectations (e.g., franchise, subcontract, licensing, network) and more loosely controlled partnerships where partners have more flexibility in how they use and implement the solution (e.g., open source, technical assistance).

EXAMPLES
(Tight Control) Subcontracting - Living Goods
When Living Goods, a community health worker-focused organization, was first testing and expanding its model, it partnered with BRAC – a well-established international NGO with an existing network of community health workers. This partnership had very clear expectations for the way the program would be implemented through BRAC, as Living Goods was still seeking to control the model and iterate as it collected more data.

(Tight Control) Social franchising - Kidogo
Kidogo, a social enterprise focused on solving the dearth of quality childcare options in East Africa, uses a social franchise model to scale its impact. The organization "identifies, trains, and supports female entrepreneurs (Mamapreneurs) to start or grow their own child care micro-business in their local communities." Kidogo provides training and resources to its franchisees, and establishes minimum standards that must be met.

(Medium Control) Wholesale distribution and technical assistance - VisionSpring
VisionSpring, a social enterprise working to create access to affordable eyewear for those living on under $4 per day, has pursued partnerships with wholesale distributors to scale its impact. Through this partnership, VisionSpring not only sells bulk quantities of glasses, but also provides sell-through support and training to ensure that the sale of those glasses aligns with VisionSpring's mission. Read more about VisionSpring's scaling journey here.

(Loose Control) Open source - KABOOM!

U.S.-based social enterprise KABOOM! developed a model and process for creating kid-designed play spaces in communities that have less access to such opportunities. KABOOM! has scaled across the U.S. offering a range of free and low-cost resources, from free online toolkits (the "recipe") to training seminars, which helps partners in local communities learn about the KABOOM! approach and adapt and implement it for their own use.

LIKELY DOERS & PAYERS AT SCALE:
- Doers: Private entity partners, with varying level of support from primary organization.
- Payers: Depends on model.

BEST SUITED FOR:
- Solutions that benefit from local adaptation.
- Solutions that are simple enough for others to adopt and adapt successfully.
- Solutions where knowledge-sharing among implementers is important.
- Organizations who don't have the infrastructure to implement widely, but where other organizations do exist with that infrastructure – as well as the interest to do so!

YOU SHOULD KNOW: Implications when pursuing partnering with private entities
- **Organization role.** Providing technical assistance and supporting program adaptation requires a different skill set than that which is required for direct implementation.
- **Control over outcomes**. Allowing others to adopt and adapt your model means that you have less control over decisions and outcomes, and likely less control over (or access to) data.
- **Fundraising**. Some organizations have found it more difficult to raise funding for the "softer" work of enabling other partners than for the work of direct implementation.
- **Sustainability.** Partnering with long-term actors in various communities helps to bolster the sustainability of the solution.
- **Credit**. Since other organizations are at the forefront of implementation, the primary organization will not accrue as much credit for the work.
- **Risk**. The primary organization takes on decreased financial and reputational risks over the course of implementation.

Scaling Pathway: **INFLUENCING**

Changing behavior, policy, and/or markets by influencing the activities of others

INFLUENCE	Opinions/ Behavior	Policy	Markets
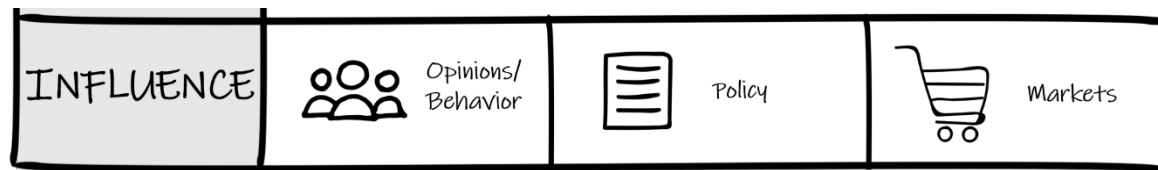
DESCRIPTION

Changing the conversation around your impact area by influencing others to make change, generally with respect to behaviors, policy, and/or markets. The influencing work is generally accomplished through advocacy, lobbying, awareness building, or policy change. Most organizations move to influencing work (or add influencing as a pathway) once they have established significant traction implementing a solution using other scaling pathways. Some organizations, however, are established to focus solely on influencing efforts.

EXAMPLES

Changing behavior: B Lab

B Lab works to change the narrative and behaviors about the role of business – shifting the focus from maximizing returns for shareholders to serving all stakeholders. Among other things, B Lab created the B Corp Certification, which is a designation that a business is meeting high standards of verified performance, accountability, and transparency on factors from employee benefits and charitable giving to supply chain practices and input materials.

Influencing government policy: Fundación Capital

As of 2019, Fundación Capital has worked across 14 Latin American countries to embed financial inclusion into social protection systems through policy and regulatory changes and unlocking of capital. FC brings its technical expertise to help governments understand and develop solutions around financial inclusion gaps. As policy, regulatory, and national strategy opportunities arise during that process, FC uses its data and experience to advocate for aligned changes. FC has also assisted four country governments in the design and implementation of a policy-based graduation approach, securing commitments from those governments to co-finance this initiative with an additional $70 million. Read more about Fundación Capital's scaling strategy here.

Influencing markets: Health Care Without Harm

Given that the health care system represents 18% of the U.S. economy and 10% of the global economy, one of HCWH's longer-term strategies has been to "aggregate hospital purchasing to move the market toward healthier alternatives." HCWH works with hospitals and supply chain partners in Market Transformation Groups to set new product standards.

Given the purchasing power of health care systems, manufacturers adapt to these new standards to attract or maintain their health care business - thus changing the overall environmental sustainability of products in the market. The success of HCWH's efforts to move markets has often led to policy change (e.g., the phase out of and eventual global treaty on mercury) and has appeared to be a more enduring pathway than pursuing policy change alone. Read more about Health Care Without Harm's scaling strategies here.

Influencing behaviors: Zusha!
Zusha! was a road traffic safety campaign designed to decrease the incidence of crashes by Kenya's popular small public service passenger vans. The effort placed stickers inside the vans, encouraging passengers to speak up if drivers were being reckless or dangerous. An RCT found that vans with stickers had 25% fewer incidents.

LIKELY DOERS & PAYERS AT SCALE:
- Doers: The primary organization must work to influence change, which others will ideally adopt.
- Payers: Depends on the model.

BEST SUITED FOR:
- Solutions for which there is high demand or receptivity from others (e.g., government, other stakeholders)
- Organization is credible, well-respected, and also less concerned with brand and credit gains in pursuing this pathway (and OK with working selves out of a job)
- Control is unimportant. It doesn't matter exactly what gets implemented, change along a broad spectrum related to your impact area is acceptable.
- The innovation is an idea or set of principles, not a complex program or organizational model that would be difficult to implement.

YOU SHOULD KNOW: Implications when pursuing an influence strategy
- **Control**. The organization will wield little to no control over final outcomes and quality.
- **Measurement**. It can be difficult to create metrics to capture systems changes, and difficult to collect data against those metrics since there are so many actors engaged. (Resource: *As Your Drive to Systems Change, Shift Your Conceptions of Data*, from Scaling Pathways, here.)
- **Fundraising**. It can be difficult to raise funding for influence efforts, as results most often occur over long periods of time, have fewer clear and easily accessible metrics, and many funders still value attribution over contribution.
- **Local adaptation.** Influencing strategies allows for adaptation to local contexts.
- **Government influence.** Efforts to influence policy can be sidetracked by quickly changing political priorities or changing political parties. (Resource: *Proactively Manage – or Avoid – Politics*, from Scaling Pathways, here.)