

## #1: INNOVATING FOR SCALED IMPACT

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### THE LANGUAGE, THE FRAME

**SCALING** is about narrowing the gap between our current efforts and the total size of the problem(s) we are trying to solve. The goal is not to grow an organization but to scale the **IMPACT** to match the size of the need. We have a [short video](#) explaining scaling impact (and another describing [common pathways](#)).

**INNOVATION** is a tool that we can use to scale. Innovation doesn't need to be a new invention, a shiny new thing... but it's also not just incremental improvement (although that is important too!). One helpful framework to think about innovating to scaled impact is [Bridgespan's Engine 1/Engine 2 framework](#):

- **ENGINE 1:** Your core, existing model with continuous improvement and incremental innovation.
- **ENGINE 2:** The space where disruptive innovation happens – building on your core assets to test something different, which could include new approaches or pathways to scale.

*Examples: [One Acre Fund's](#) farmer bundle, plus training government officers, influencing seed markets, etc. [Hill Learning Center's](#) direct teaching and tutoring programs, plus [HillRAP edtech program](#).*

### THE WHY: YOUR BASIS FOR INNOVATION

Innovation takes resources and entails risk so it is critical to be clear on **WHY** you want to innovate – which is often some combination of factors, including factors such as:

- **MORE IMPACT:** reach more people; deepen impact for a key population; fill a gap, etc (*for Hill, a desire to reach many more students than they could through their direct service model*).
- **MORE MONEY:** increasing revenues, attracting new funding sources, etc (*for Hill this was also a key driver, to bring in more revenues to support and strengthen their core direct-service programs*).
- **ADAPTATION:** responding to a policy or regulatory change, or a political or climate-related crisis.
- **OPPORTUNITY:** taking advantage of a new partnership or a shift in the competitive landscape.

### LESSONS LEARNED

- **ASSESSMENT.** Some common criteria for assessing which innovations to move forward: Impact (will it create better and more impact than other alternatives?). Demand (will people actually want to use it?). Feasibility (can we make it a reality? i.e., do we have the right people? reasonable path to funding?).
- **ITERATION.** Innovation is not a lightbulb moment; it's a long process of systematic experimentation, thoughtful learning, iteration. Iterate around the **WHAT** (*for Hill, testing and refining the reading program*) and the **HOW** (*taking small steps like the evolution from pro bono software partners to short-term contractors to in-house software developer*) while always staying true to the WHY.
- **RISK.** Actively manage and communicate risks – including with your Board – and have an exit strategy (or “soft landing”) ready. Make peace with the unknown, and be clear on what you will NOT do.
- **PEOPLE.** Ensure you have the right people in the right roles – both internally and externally through collaborators – to support innovation, and be sure that you are aligning the whole organization around a shared vision that includes both the core programs and the innovations.

*Thank you to [Hill Learning Center](#) for their work and to Executive Director Beth Anderson for her insights!*

Find more resources on scaling impact on [CASE's website](#) and on [ScalingPathways.com](#).