

SCALING SOCIAL INNOVATIONS EVALUATION BRIEF #2

May 2020



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RECOVER is a City of Edmonton-led project that is working to address the complex challenge of urban wellness. The project began in 2017, in response to concerns of residents in the downtown core neighbourhoods about the cumulative impacts of existing and emerging social services in Edmonton's downtown core neighbourhoods.

The purpose of RECOVER is to cultivate individual and community wellness in the neighbourhoods of Boyle Street, Central McDougall, Downtown, McCauley, Queen Mary Park, and Whyte Avenue. Recover participants employ a unique social innovation approach where neighbourhood residents, social agencies, and business work together to experimentally apply practical solutions to their everyday challenges. RECOVER's approach includes ethnographic research, working together with residents, the social sector, businesses and government to build on what is already working, and co-designing and testing solutions that can improve the wellbeing of residents.¹

To do so, RECOVER followed a systematic process to surface, test, and scale innovative ideas in three broad phases, each with two steps. (See Table 1.)

To date, Recover participants have produced over 25 prototypes and continue to work on five of them. While the Recover Initiative stakeholders have learned a great deal about discovery and experimental phase of the work, they are only beginning to understand what is required to sustain and – if appropriate – scale the wellness solutions that prove effective.

This brief explores the early insights of the Recover Initiative based on three prototypes that have attained the pilot-sustaining-scaling steps using an emerging set of scaling frameworks developed by experienced social innovators from across Canada. It is important to note that the insights presented in this brief are from a moment in time in RECOVER's overall journey. Additional insights and lessons will emerge over time.

The Innovation Continuum (Exhibit 1) outlines the general phases involved in developing innovations.

Exhibit 1: The Innovation Continuum

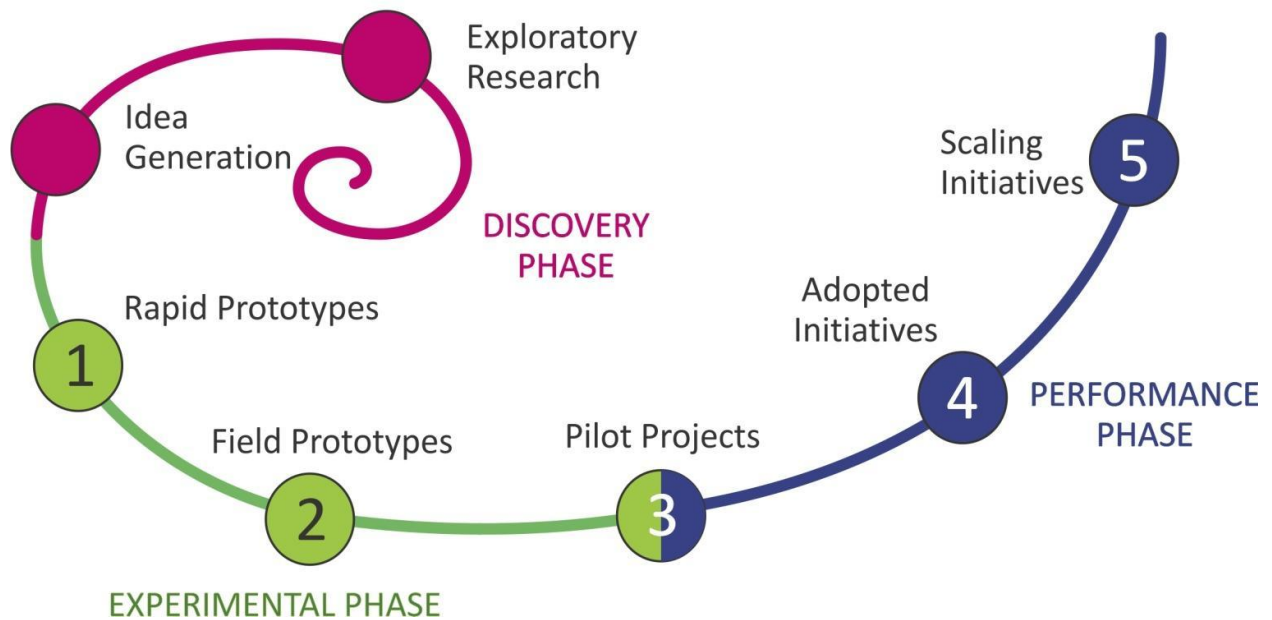


Table 1: The Innovation Continuum Features

Discovery Phase	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Research: spending time with people in the neighbourhoods to understand their daily experiences and needs. 2. Ideation: surfacing different ideas on how to improve conditions.
Experimental Phase	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Prototypes: testing the ideas through rapid prototypes (e.g. getting feedback on the full explanation of the idea from people) or field prototypes (e.g. testing a rough version of the idea quickly in field conditions) to see if it's worth exploring. 4. Pilots: creating a longer term, more systematic test of an idea in the community to see if it's useful.
Performance Phase	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 5. Sustaining: formal adoption of the innovation by at least one organization. 6. Scaling: expanding the innovation for broader impact with other organizations and contexts.



The question of how to move innovations along the continuum is a question of scaling. Scaling innovations in the social sector is complex for a variety of factors. There is a wide and broad range of stakeholders involved in the work. Many innovations work in one neighbourhood or organization but not in another. The public or philanthropic resources available to fund the original innovation, never mind its expansion, are often scarce. There are a lot of things to consider.


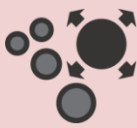
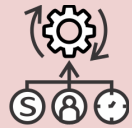

In the experience of a half-dozen veteran social innovators across Canada (Etmanski 2015, McLean & Gargani 2019, Tullock 2018, Riddell & Lee-Moore 2015), the success of social innovators to **scale the impact** of their original innovation depends on their ability to make progress in (at least) five distinct, yet interrelated, dimensions of scaling: **deep, out, up, scree**, and **infrastructure**. (See Exhibit 2 and Table 2.)

Exhibit 2: The Innovation Continuum & Dimensions of Scaling



Table 2: Dimensions of Scaling

Scaling Dimension		Key Questions	
1: Deep		Capturing the hearts and minds of innovation stakeholders, enabler and the general public so there is a demand to adopt and support the innovation.	Who are the would-be adopters of the innovation? Why (or why not) are they interested in participating or supporting the innovation? How can we deepen their support?
2: Out		Replicating an innovation to other organizations or geographic areas to reach more people.	Who and where are the possible adopters of the innovation? How broadly can the innovation be replicated? How might the

			original innovation need to be adapted to different contexts?
3: Up		Adjusting larger policies, regulations, structures, and administrative practices to support the expansion of the innovation.	What parts of the larger systems support the scaling of the innovation? Which act as barriers? What needs to be adjusted to support scaling? How?
4: Scree		Developing additional innovations required to support the original innovation.	What else is required to make the original innovation successful? What other innovations can we build around this one to make it stronger?
5: Infrastructure		Increasing the capital, data, knowledge, talent, and relationships to support and scale an innovation.	What types of financial, human, or technical resources does the innovation need to be sustained, to grow, and to expand? How can we increase their volume, quality of accessibility?
6: Impact		Broadening and deepening the positive outcomes of the innovation.	What is the magnitude, depth, quality, and durability of the impact of the innovations on resident and neighbourhood well-being?

Through an examination of the Innovation Continuum and the Dimensions of Scaling as applied to three RECOVER prototypes, we are able to offer a number of insights:

INSIGHTS

The three vignettes provided in this Brief – viewed through the framework – provide a number of informative insights about scaling social innovations.

1

All six dimensions of scaling are important. The ability of small innovations to generate a larger impact depends on its stakeholders’ broad success in scaling the innovation deep (aka capturing hearts and minds), out (aka adoption by others), up (aka policies and regulations), scree (aka complementary innovations) and infrastructure and (aka capital, knowledge, networks). No scaling, no impact.

2

Efforts to scale innovations are adaptive and unique. The partners in the City Center project proceeded smoothly from (1) idea to (2) prototype to (3) pilot to (4) laying out the conditions for scaling. The benefits that emerged from the field prototype of a similar model, Welcome Mat, were such that two agencies adopted it without a conventional pilot project. Furthermore, raising money to fund the replication of a roughly similar placemaking model is an easier task for private sector participants in the City Center project than it is for the cash-strapped social service agencies involved in the Project Welcome Mat project. This is due to the fact that

they work in sectors that employ different business models. Each scaling effort must be tailored to its unique context.

3

Scaling requires multiple roles and a lot of effort. Successful social innovations don't spontaneously scale themselves: stakeholders must work together to fulfill multiple roles in order to make progress:

- Innovators – develop, test and refine the original innovation.
- Adopters – adopt and adapt the original innovation to suit their context.
- Funders – fund the adoption and spread of the original innovation.
- Policy Makers – adjust policies and regulations to allow the innovation to flourish.
- Public – inform, support and/or resist the innovation and its scaling.
- Bridgers – convene, facilitate, mobilize networks and funds, and advocate.

It is worth noting the Recover teams played the often invisible – though critical – bridging role in each of the three vignettes.

4

Scaling successful social innovations takes time. The Project Welcome Mat prototype was developed and completed in the early summer of 2018. Yet it wasn't until the following year that the host agency continued with a scaled-up version, and another agency was able to test a similar prototype. Further replication appears (at least partially) dependent on the creation of a Sidewalk Improvement Program. The City Center and Connector projects have similar trajectories. Scaling social innovation is a long-term, sustained process characterized by incremental progress in each of the six areas of scaling.

5

Not all innovations are meant to be scaled. Only three of the estimated 30 prototypes that have emerged through the Recover Initiative are fully in – or entering – the scaling process. Their future prospects appear promising but their success is not guaranteed. Just as private sector companies often need to test hundreds of prototypes to find one that turns out to be wildly successful in the market, it takes a lot of experiments and scaling efforts to find one that makes a dramatic impact.

As the work of the Recover initiative continues to unfold, the Recover team aims to capture and communicate what it takes both to experiment with new, community-driven ways to address complex social issues and to scale those that prove successful for greater impact.