PAYER/DOER CANVAS

Scale Toolkit

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Photo: Hippocampus

A tool to define and validate key partnerships for scale.

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The approach is a simple yet powerful way to think about scale: it involves identifying **who will replicate** your proven model at scale and **who will fund** that replication, helping to create a map of **key assumptions to test** and doubts to answer, in order to refine the strategy.

[Adapted from Mulago Foundation]

To stretch your reasoning about (really) scaling up.

We find the tool particularly important because:

- Early stage organizations in low and middle income countries often grapple with limited resources, diverse stakeholder expectations and complex socio-economic landscapes. By clearly identifying who will execute the solution (the doer) and who will fund it (the payer), organizations can streamline their strategies and **allocate resources more efficiently.**

- This approach provides a structured framework to navigate the intricacies of scaling in challenging environments. It ensures that the organization's model **aligns with the realities of their context,** maximizing the chances of sustainable impact.

- By focusing on scalability from the outset, educational organizations can **better anticipate potential roadblocks**, adapt to local nuances, and ensure that their interventions have a lasting and widespread effect in the communities they serve.

HOW TO USE IT?

Basically, you have to identify:

Who is my most probable DOER at scale?

Who is my most probable PAYER at scale?

What are the main ASSUMPTIONS behind each decision, that I need to validate?

Who is my most probable DOER at scale?

The Doer is who will replicate your solution at scale. Who is going to deliver it to your final consumer, given these four options?

1. **Your own organization:** Whether it's an NGO or a business, you can scale impact through growth or leverage. However, maintaining control over replication allows you to ensure high quality in a complex model. The downside is that building and expanding a large organization can be challenging, particularly in a difficult funding environment.

2. **Numerous NGOs:** They have the capacity to replicate your model, which can alleviate your fundraising responsibilities. However, NGOs are often reluctant to implement ideas from other NGOs, either because they want to maintain their uniqueness in a competitive market, or they attempt to implement cost-effectively and fail to achieve the same impact.

3. **Numerous businesses:** We're not looking at individual businesses, but industries that can solve problems. To leverage this doer, a solution needs to be profitable—the more profitable it is, the more it will be replicated. However, this excludes many important solutions. Raising capital can also be a challenge: mainstream investors often avoid these types of investments, and impact investors are typically more risk-averse than their name suggests.

4. **Governments:** They have the resources, the capacity, and the mandate to serve, making them potentially the only way many basic service solutions will scale. However, they can often be inefficient, inconsistent, and corrupt. So, brace yourself for the challenges.

Who is my most probable PAYER at scale?

The Payer is the entity that will fund the replication of your model at scale. The choice of payer will greatly influence the scalability of your model.

Here are the four potential payers for your model, each with its own set of trade-offs:

1. **Customers**: This involves generating revenue from product sales. The advantage is that it can provide a steady stream of income if your product is in demand. However, the challenge is that you need to consistently sell a lot of products to a lot of people to maintain this revenue stream.

2. **Public Funding**: This refers to revenue raised by governments. While this can provide substantial funding, especially for public services, the limitation is that many poorer governments don't collect much in taxes, which can limit the available funding.

3. **Big Aid**: This involves multi- or bilateral revenue from wealthy governments to poorer ones. Sometimes this aid is delivered directly to the doer, and sometimes it's delivered via the government. While Big Aid can provide significant funding, the paperwork and restrictions associated with it can be a major burden.

4. **Private Philanthropy**: This ranges from large foundations like Gates to individual small donors. While private philanthropy can be a complex and challenging field to navigate, once you gain some momentum, it can become easier to attract funding—up to a certain point.

AN EXAMPLE

A fictional example:

MathMasters India is an organization that offers an innovative math curriculum tailored for public and affordable private schools in India. Their curriculum is designed to enhance numeracy skills, incorporating interactive learning modules, hands-on activities, and culturally relevant examples to make math more engaging and relatable for students.

AN EXAMPLE

Your most probable DOER

Your own organization	
Numerous NGOs	X
Numerous Business	
Government	(maybe)

What makes your most probable DOER a good fit for your solution?

Given the diverse educational landscape in India and the presence of numerous NGOs working in the education sector, multiple NGOs are the most probable doers. These NGOs, with their established networks and expertise in educational interventions, can effectively introduce and implement the MathMasters curriculum in different regions, given the curriculum is low in complexity for implementation.

AN EXAMPLE

Your most probable PAYER

Customers	(In the APS sector, maybe)
Public Funding	
Big Aid	
Private Philanthropy	X

What makes your most probable PAYER a good fit for your solution?

Private Philanthropy, especially through CSR in India. In India, the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandate requires companies to spend 2% of their net profit on social initiatives. This creates a unique opportunity for private philanthropy, as many corporations are keen on investing in educational projects in their own region. Enhancing numeracy skills through a specialized curriculum like MathMasters could be an attractive proposition for these companies.

What are the main assumptions behind your chosen DOER at scale, that you can benefit from validating?

Many NGOs:

- **Network and Outreach**: NGOs working in the education sector in India have established networks with affordable private schools, making the introduction and adoption of the MathMasters curriculum smoother.
- **Cultural Sensitivity**: NGOs, with their ground-level presence, can ensure that the curriculum is implemented with cultural sensitivity and relevance, enhancing its acceptance and effectiveness.
- **Feedback and Iteration**: NGOs can provide real-time feedback on the curriculum's effectiveness, allowing MathMasters to iterate and improve the content based on actual classroom experiences.

What are the main assumptions behind your chosen PAYER at scale, that you can benefit from validating?

Private Philanthropy, especially through CSR in India:

- **Alignment with CSR Goals**: The MathMasters curriculum aligns with the educational upliftment goals of many corporations' CSR initiatives, making it a potential area for investment.
- **Visibility and Branding**: Corporations might see an opportunity in associating their brand with an educational initiative, enhancing their corporate image and fulfilling their CSR obligations.
- **Long-term Impact**: Private philanthropists and corporations are often interested in initiatives that promise long-term societal impact. The enhancement of numeracy skills can lead to better educational outcomes and job opportunities, making it a compelling investment.

Once the assumptions about the Payer and Doer have been identified, the next steps are to validate, refine, and act on these assumptions.

Validate: Use research, data collection, conversations, and pilot projects to test your assumptions. This could involve conducting market research, interviewing potential payers and doers, or running small-scale tests of your model with different payers and doers.

Refine: Based on the results of your validation efforts, refine your assumptions. You may find that some assumptions were correct, while others need to be adjusted. This is an iterative process that may need to be repeated several times.

Act: Once you have a set of validated assumptions about your Payer and Doer, you can use these to inform your scaling strategy. This might involve seeking funding from the identified Payer, building partnerships with the identified Doer, or adjusting your model to better fit the needs and capabilities of the Payer and Doer.

Remember, the goal is not to prove your initial assumptions right, but to arrive at a realistic and effective strategy for scaling your model. This requires being open to learning and adjusting your assumptions as necessary.

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