



Scaling Programs and Growing Impact Tip Sheet

Scaling refers to growing the impact of a program by finding what works and making it work for more people. By understanding the conditions for successful scaling and preparing accordingly, organizations can maintain or improve community outcomes after the scaling has occurred. Previous AmeriCorps-funded programs have demonstrated that scaling efforts require strong evidence, organizational capacity and implementation infrastructure, and an enabling context. See the "About This Tip Sheet" box for more information.

This tip sheet defines different scaling approaches, describes the careful planning necessary for successful scaling, and offers action-oriented recommendations for scaling programs and growing their impact.

Approaches to Growing Program Impact and Scaling

Scaling is successful when organizations maintain or grow their programs' benefits and effects after scaling. When considering which programs to scale, organizations should review the results of their evaluation studies. While urgency may be a deciding factor in scaling promising initiatives, programs with strong evidence of positive benefits should be prioritized for scaling. Growing program impacts and scaling can include expansion, replication, or adaptation—or a combination of these approaches. The strategies to scale a program will depend on how the program works and where it seeks to grow its impact.



Expansion

Expand the program to serve more people in the same target population at the same location.

Example: The organization increases the number of people it can serve at an employment center by hiring five more job search specialists, who will each serve 20 additional jobseekers.



Replication

Replicate the program to serve the same target population at a new location.

Example: The organization provides a reading program for fifth graders in one school district and replicates this program with fifth graders in a different school district.



Adaptation

Adapt the program, such as by modifying the depth and range of services, to serve a different target population in the same/different location or serve the same population in a different setting/organizational environment.

Example: The organization adapts a parent training curriculum designed for mothers to incorporate language more inclusive of fathers.

What your organization can do:

- Consider supporting programs that deepen services and strengthen outcomes and those that serve more people or implement a program model in new locations as the basis for further scaling.
- Determine what program components cannot be changed and are integral to its effectiveness and what program complements can be adapted to meet the needs of new populations, locations, or funding and organizational environments. This is important as changing core components of a program could reduce program impact.

Conditions for Successful Scaling

To scale a program successfully, both the program and the implementing organization must be ready. The organization should have a growing body of evidence of the program's effectiveness and indicators that confirm the community needs the service the program provides. This evidence can help determine how, when, and what programs to scale. Once the implementing organization confirms the program is effective and needed, it must develop its capacity to scale the program. This includes building knowledge of the community, strengthening its

organizational environment, choosing the setting where it seeks to scale the program, and examining its internal infrastructure and capacity, such as data systems, human resources, and administrative support. The organization must also establish relationships with funders and partners in philanthropy, government, the private sector, and the local community to secure the necessary resources for scaling to occur. In addition, the program model being scaled must be stable and well-documented. This includes developing implementation manuals to thoroughly document the program model components and key activities. These can provide a starting point from which to implement the model in a new location/setting or with a new population.

What your organization can do:

- Use evidence to identify what works and strengthen the program, determine which programs are effective and could be scaled, and attract potential additional funders to the program.
- Document how the program works to help implement the program with new populations or in new locations.
- Assess the need for the program's services in communities where you seek to scale the program, including the supply and demand for similar services.
- Review organizational capacity and infrastructure needs.
- Cultivate relationships and deepen your knowledge of the communities where the program is to be scaled.
- Enhance partnerships to support program implementation.

Scaling Checklists: Assessing Your Level of Evidence and Readiness (SCALER)

The [SCALER framework](#) can help organizations prepare to successfully scale effective interventions based on the conditions above. This framework is based on successful scaling principles from implementation science research. When using this online, interactive tool, organizations should consider the perspectives of all team members at all levels and gather information on any research studies on the program. Organizations should also seek to understand the program's model, target population, and implementation supports needed for scaling and the organization's culture and infrastructure to support scaling.

The three SCALER steps:

1. [Identify evidence of effectiveness](#). This step includes a checklist to assess whether an intervention has evidence of effectiveness. If this evidence does not exist, such evidence must be built (step 2). If evidence does exist, the organization is ready to prepare for scaling (step 3).
2. [Build evidence of effectiveness](#). This step includes a checklist to help an organization build evidence of the program's effectiveness. If the program is shown to be effective, the organization is ready to prepare for scaling.
3. [Get ready to scale](#). This step includes a series of checklists to assess whether an organization and program are ready to scale by walking through the necessary conditions that support successful scaling.

About the Office of Research and Evaluation

The [AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation](#) assists AmeriCorps and its partners in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data and insights about AmeriCorps programs and civic life in America.

About AmeriCorps

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About This Tip Sheet

This tip sheet is based on research sponsored by the AmeriCorps Office of Research and Evaluation that collected data from four grantees and three subgrantees from the Social Innovation Fund (SIF) and data from one funding partner and two experts in the field. The [SIF issue brief](#), synthesized for this document, was originally developed by ICF (authored by Lara Malakoff and Janet Griffith) and published in 2016 as a deliverable of the SIF Classic National Assessment. If you have any questions, please contact evaluation@cns.gov.