

Analysis standards for social innovations

Up  Social Innovation and Scaling



This document provides a general description of the standards used by UpSocial for analysing and evaluating social innovations. UpSocial seeks to solve pressing social challenges through effective, efficient and scalable innovations.

During the past nine years, we have analysed and documented over 2,000 innovations from around the world in an attempt to explore their adaptation and adoption in other local and national contexts. This journey has forced us to build standards around five essential dimensions of social innovations that we are now pleased to share.

We have used models and references created by many others before us. Thus, this is not a new document. It draws from numerous research and standards developed by other organisations. We consider it a living document that claims

to be regularly reviewed, both to define the essential dimensions of analysis and the levels within each dimension. By documenting and openly sharing this document, we invite readers to help us improve it.

Why this document?

People and organisations around the world are constantly experimenting with new approaches to solve pressing social problems. Instead of starting from scratch, UpSocial systematically identifies who is trying to tackle the same problem somewhere else, and analyses their outcomes, the strength of the evidence that supports them, and the theory of change. We have found this process extremely powerful when it is driven by demand, by the need to find more effective responses to social problems.

Standardised information allows us to effectively understand and compare innovations, and it helps our clients and

their stakeholders decide which ones could have the highest potential in terms of impact and scale.

Five dimensions

UpSocial uses five standards of analysis to evaluate the potential impact of an innovation on a different context.

The type of innovation. UpSocial defines social innovation as a more effective, efficient, sustainable and just response to a social problem. This is a broad but simple concept that embraces many types of actions. This is why we use the classification proposed by Charles Leadbeater and Annika Wong as a way of defining the different nature and scope of innovations: from those that improve or complement existing responses, to those that reinvent or transform the system.

The strength of the evidence. Many innovations claim to have generated social outcomes, but the strength of their evidence varies significantly. We therefore use a standard to understand the attribution and correlation of outcomes with the innovation. It assesses the type of studies and sources used to elucidate whether the innovation works or not.

The adaptation experience. This standard analyses the degree of experience in taking the innovation to different contexts. Whether it is a new service or a product, a way of operating, a business model, the capacity to activate latent resources or tapping into new resources... UpSocial assesses the experience in adapting the essence of the innovation and the successes it has had in generating similar outcomes.

The systematisation of the transference model. This dimension analyses how the innovation has structured its knowledge and information, how well-documented it is to ensure adoption and adaptation with fidelity.

The consolidation of the income-generating model. This dimension The way the innovation creates, delivers, and captures value is an essential component of UpSocial's analysis. This is why this standard analyses every innovation's income-generating model and its adaptability outside the original context.

We invite all readers and users to send feedback and help enrich this tool. We hope that it will be useful for orientating action and contributing to improve the scaling up of great social innovations.

The present document is an original creation by UpSocial based on the following sources:

Evidence for ESSA - Every Student Succeeds Act by the USA Congress. Retrieved from <https://www.evidenceforessa.org>

Leadbeater, C. and Wong, A. (2010). "Learning from the Extremes". Cisco Systems, Inc. Retrieved from https://www.cisco.com/c/dam/en_us/about/citizenship/socio-economic/docs/LearningfromExtremes_WhitePaper.pdf

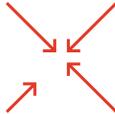
Puttick, R. and Ludlow, J. (2012). "Standards of evidence for Impact Investing". Nesta. Retrieved from <https://www.nesta.org.uk/report/standards-of-evidence-for-impact-investing/>

Innovation type

UpSocial uses four categories to help understand the type of innovation according to the scope of action from which the initiative is being introduced (formal or informal) and the type of change generated in the system (sustaining or disruptive).

Scope of action: On the one hand, formality refers to what takes place in the regulated field and within the institutions which have traditionally responded to the challenge. On the other hand, informality is seen as what is found in less institutionalised contexts, often within the quotidian field or in areas that have traditionally not been related with the problem solving.

Change generated: A sustaining innovation improves an existing organisation or product or service by making it more effective. A disruptive innovation radically simplifies how a service is delivered, or it makes it accessible to many more people, it might change power structures, or displace established institutions, organisations and alliances.

Sustaining innovations	Formal  Improving The innovation is generated within the formal field. It suggests performance improvements of existing actors and institutions, without questioning their original approach.	Informal  Supplementing The innovation effectively responds to the challenge involving external actors, usually within the community. It contributes with strategies that add up when achieving a bigger impact in the key aspects of the problem.
Disruptive innovations	 Reinventing The change is introduced within the formal system, but it formulates a totally new approach and forces to rethink existing responses, such as providing different roles to traditional agents or incorporating new ones.	 Transforming The change is generated outside the traditional system, offering totally new responses that represent alternatives to the existing ones.

Strength of the evidence

This standard analyses the strength of the evidence supporting the outcomes of an innovation. It recognises five levels of evidence, based on the objectivity of the measurement process and reports supporting the attribution and correlation of outcomes to the activity.

The highest evidence degree consists of applying scientific methods to correlate the results with the intervention. Lower levels have documented their outcomes through longitudinal studies or are building the evidence through a proven theory of change.



Proven evidence. A positive impact has been attributed to the innovation through experimental or quasi-experimental control tests.



Strong evidence. Social outcomes have been documented by external studies, strong internal monitoring tools (such as follow-up online platforms and longitudinal statistic studies) or other objectifiable data (contracts, academic results, etc.).



Promising evidence. The organisation has documented the intervention's results by means of evaluations or satisfaction surveys which provide indicators that point out a correlation with a positive change.



Documented theory of change. Although no evaluations have been conducted, the intervention is based on a consolidated and documented theory of change that foresees positive change.



Promising theory of change. There is at least one logical reason that makes the impact of the intervention predictable. External recognitions can support the theory of change.

Adaptation experience

This standard analyses the degree of experience in taking the innovation to different contexts. It looks at its trajectory and success in adapting the activity to different local contexts and generating similar outcomes.

At the highest level, the innovation is not context-specific because it has managed to generate similar outcomes in different locations. This normally implies that the essential elements of the model can be transferred to contexts with different sociocultural and/or economic characteristics. Lower levels assume less experience in transferring the innovation and generating similar outcomes.



Proven interregional adaptability. The model delivers social outcomes in two or more sociocultural contexts which are different from the original one, thus proving the model's adaptability.



Isolated interregional adaptability. The model works in a sociocultural context which is different from the original one, thus pointing out an international scale potential.



Regional adaptability. The model works outside the original context either in a regional level or in a network of locations.



Local adaptability. The model works outside the original context, in a punctual local field.



Isolated experience. The innovation works successfully in a particular local context, and there is no information on whether it is context-specific.

Transfer model

This dimension analyses how the innovations has structured its knowledge and information, how well-documented it is to ensure adoption and adaptation with fidelity

A thorough documentation of an innovation is achieved through clear procedures and systems that are specifically oriented to facilitate its implementation in other contexts and achieve at least a similar impact to the original one. Knowledge and experience are packaged in a useful and intuitive way, making it possible to generate similar outcomes.



Scalable. The innovation is thoroughly documented and it has a mature, clear and flexible transfer model, which includes systematised accompaniment.



Consolidated. The innovation is thoroughly documented and has a clear and flexible transfer model, which includes non-systematised accompaniment.



Structured. The innovation is partially documented and has at least one transference model, which are applied in a punctual way or in similar contexts.



Incipient. The innovation is partially documented, but it lacks a developed transfer model.



Explorable. The innovation is translatable to other contexts, although it is not documented nor has it a developed transfer model.

Income-generating model

The income-generating model enables to capture part of the initiative's value to ensure sustainability and potential scalability. It is irrelevant whether the innovation is promoted by an organisation or a less organised movement. What is important, however, is that the initiative can generate enough income to achieve social outcomes in a continuous and scalable way.

The adaptability of the income-generating model to other sociocultural and/or economic contexts is indicative of the innovation's transference potential.



Scalable. The conditions that allow its sustainability at scale are found in various other sociocultural and/or economic contexts.



Adapted. The conditions that allow its sustainability at scale are found in at least a different sociocultural and/or economic context.



Adaptable. The income-generating model works in contexts which are similar to the one it was originally implemented on. In addition, it offers the possibility of adapting it to different sociocultural and/or economic contexts.



Established in origin. Its sustainability conditions have been checked only in one particular context.



Experimental. The project has at least one funding source, which makes it currently feasible.

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We would like to thank everyone who contributed, made suggestions and comments during the elaboration of these standards.

We hope this tool is useful and we invite users to send their feedback to:
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www.upsocial.org
[@UpSocialBCN](https://twitter.com/UpSocialBCN)

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