

MONITORING, EVALUATION AND LEARNING (MEL)

The Innovation MEL Toolbox

An essential guide to measuring
what matters, from idea to scale

☪ Innovation thrives on creativity and a relentless drive to build and scale - yet, the critical role of monitoring, evaluation, and learning is often overlooked. UNICEF's Innovation MEL Toolbox bridges this gap, offering expertly designed, user-friendly tools that empowers our teams to generate meaningful evidence and maximize impact every day.

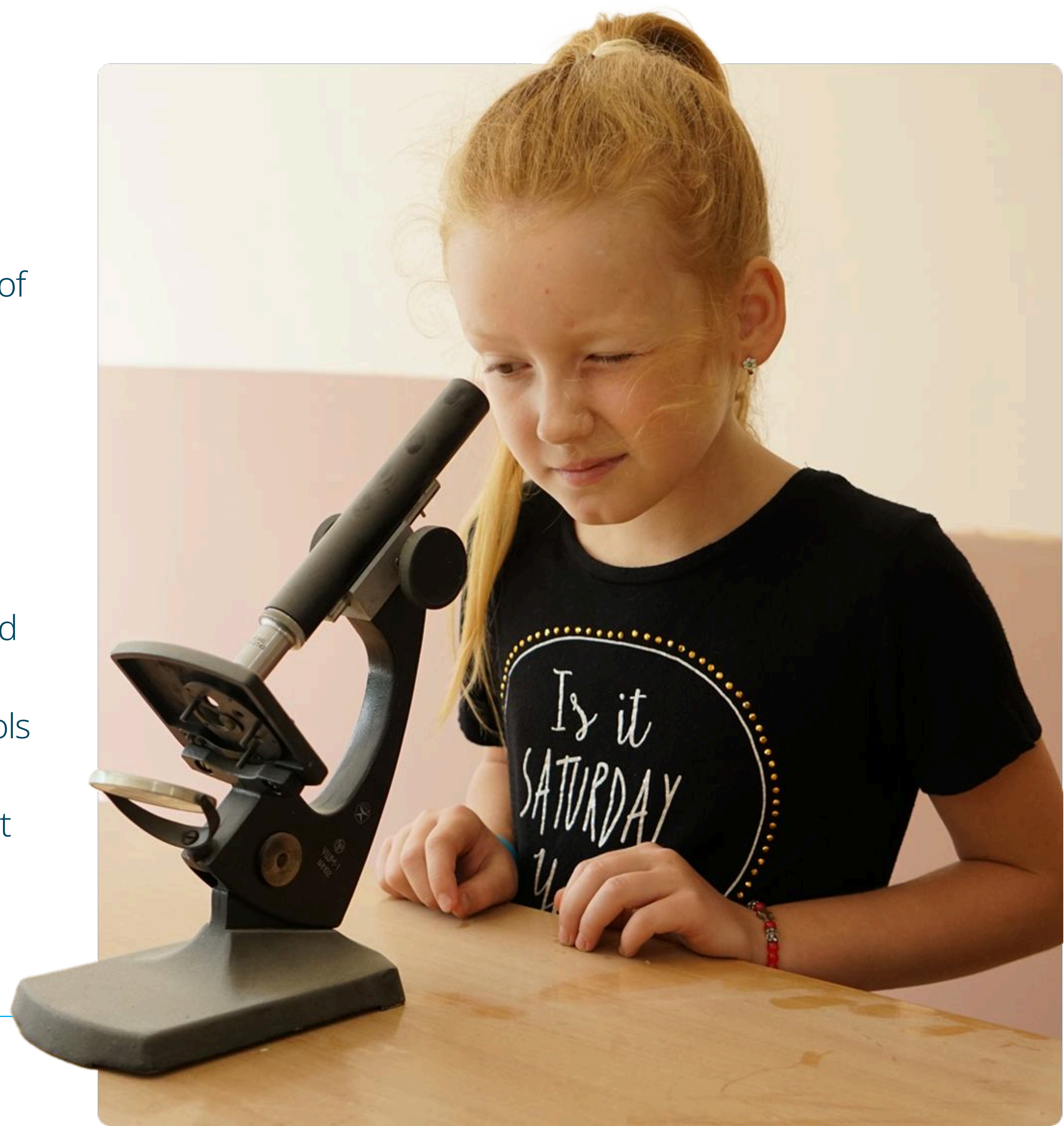
WHY GENERATE EVIDENCE FOR INNOVATIONS?

Fostering innovation in programming and advocacy for children is a key accelerator towards the child-related Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to realize the rights of every child, including adolescents, and reach the most excluded. But how do we measure what works and decide which innovations should be leveraged to best shape children's futures?

MEL practices are critical to informing key decisions throughout the innovation process. They help us understand what works, why and under what conditions. To measure innovations, traditional monitoring and evaluation (M&E) tools should be complemented with new tools that consider the inherent uncertainties and non-linear pathways that are part of innovation.

By measuring what matters, the Innovation MEL Toolbox supports results for children in the following ways:

- **Increased impact:** stronger MEL approaches ensure limited resources are spent on innovative solutions that have the most impact for children.
- **From 'prove' to 'improve':** targeted MEL tools not only prove the value of innovations but also help refine and improve a solution.
- **Clarity of needs:** the Innovation MEL toolbox provides an easy-to-follow pathway for generating evidence throughout the innovation journey, offering methodologies and tools tailored to each stage, meaning innovators can focus on innovating.



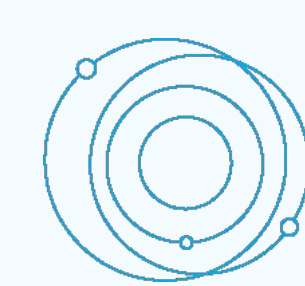
THE INNOVATION MEL TOOLBOX

The Innovation MEL Toolbox is a comprehensive compendium of resources, sourced and developed by the UNICEF Office of Innovation (OOI). It complements the 5-Dimensional (5D) Innovation Framework, which outlines evidence requirements as innovations develop from ideas to scale. The MEL Toolbox provides tools and methodologies to gather required evidence for each stage of innovation, enabling innovators to track progress, adapt quickly and make evidence-based decisions. Three different user journeys – cheat sheets, a tool repository and chatbot – offer users the ability to select tools based on their evidence needs: for quick answers, **cheat sheets** offer a curated set of suggested methodologies for assessing innovations at specific stages, with templates and visuals that vary as the innovation matures; the **tool repository** allows browsing of all available tools to find those which are appropriate using a list of curated tools and toolkits, with multiple user-friendly filters; and for UNICEF staff the **Innovation MEL Chatbot** offers guided recommendations of tools based on specified needs. Together, these three pathways provide users with everything they need in the format they prefer.

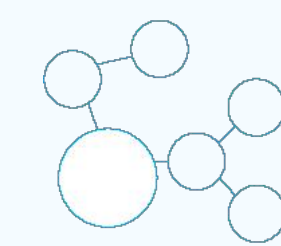


Integrating structured evidence generation with practical tools:

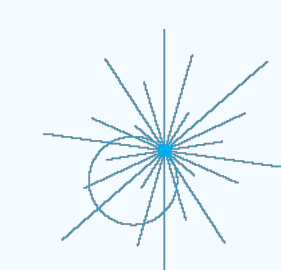
The 5-Dimensional (5D) Innovation Framework ensures that solutions are rigorously assessed across key areas essential for successful scaling – innovation, business model, impact, scalability and risk – and outlines evidence requirements for each stage of innovation. The complementary Innovation MEL Toolbox provides tools and methodologies for how to do this, offering recommended tools for each stage. Together they provide clarity on what should be measured and how.



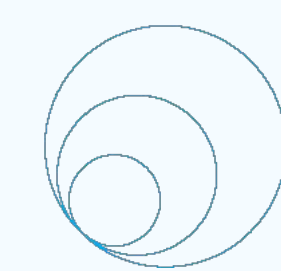
Innovation



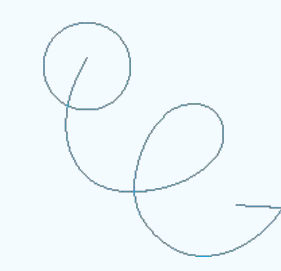
Business Model



Impact

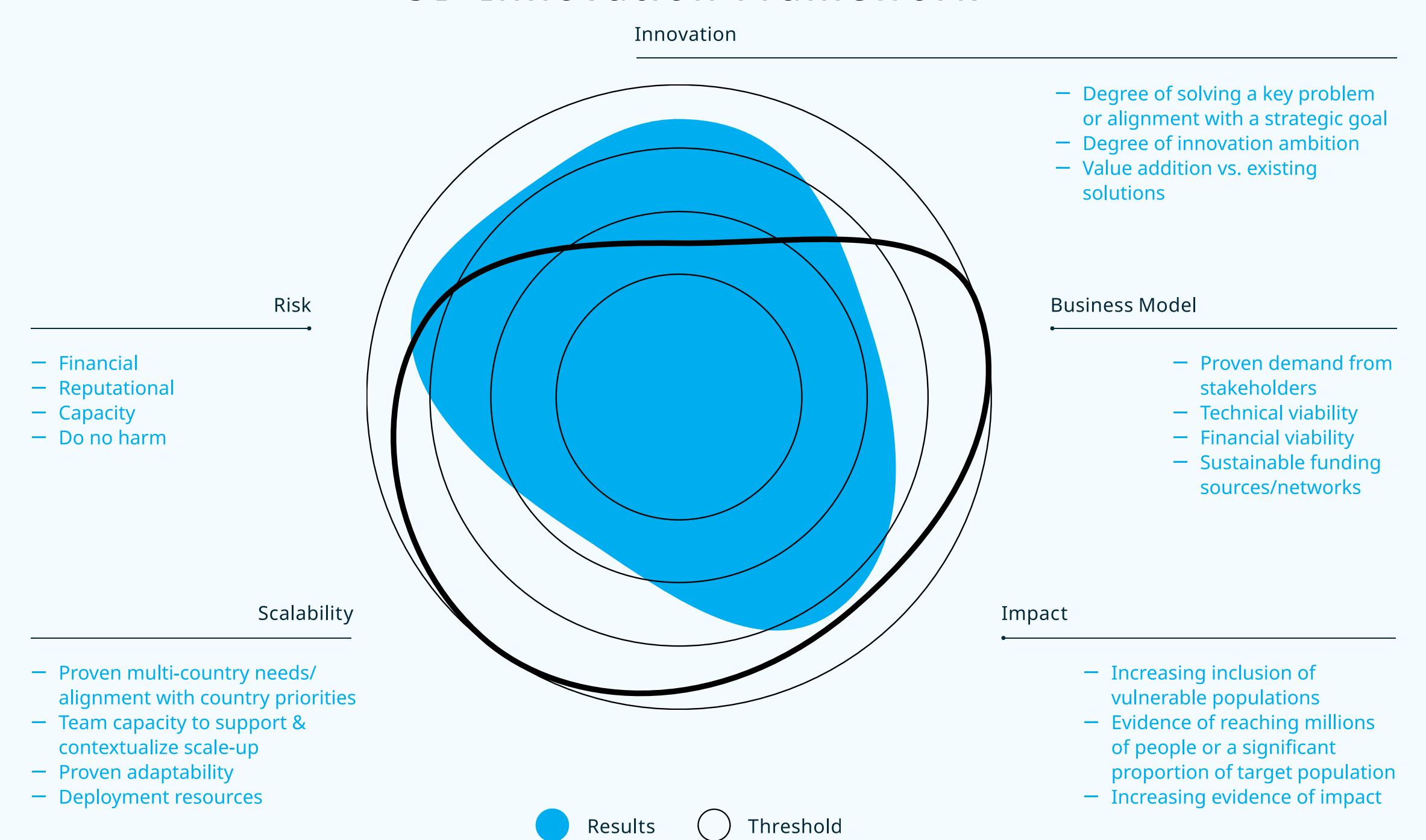


Scalability

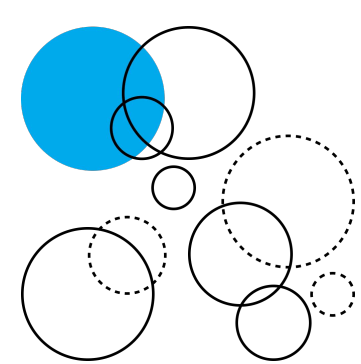


Risk

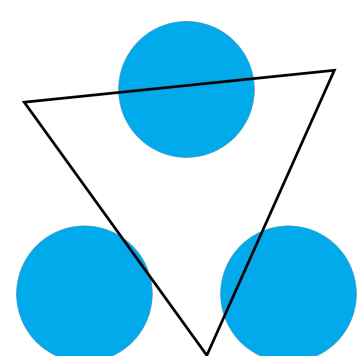
5D Innovation Framework



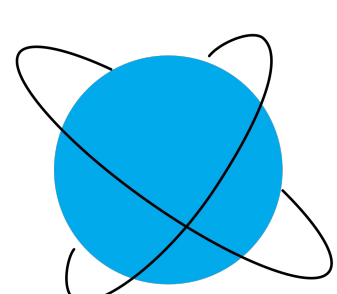
FROM IDEATION TO SCALE: INSIGHTS INTO INNOVATION STEPS



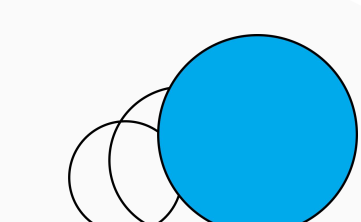
Ideation stage: defining and analyzing the problem one seeks to address and understanding the needs and context. A solution that addresses the problem is then created or sourced and validated through early-stage feedback and evidence. Example of tools: [Value Proposition Canvas](#), [Initial Theory of Change](#).



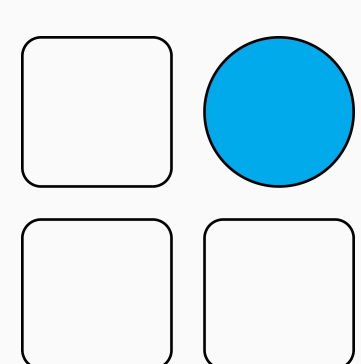
Pilot stage: small-scale field testing to see whether an innovation works as intended in real life. The focus is on feasibility, acceptability and effectiveness on a small scale, leading to a decision on whether to scale, improve or discontinue the innovation. Example of tools: Pre-post test, [Feasibility Assessment Checklist](#).



Acceleration stage: refining various aspects of the innovation to prepare for scaling. This includes two simultaneous processes: simplifying to create an easily replicable model for new geographies and contexts, and concurrently iterating different aspects of the innovation that allow for scaling up. Example of tools: [Fidelity & Adaptation Monitoring Checklist](#), [Social Return on Investment Calculation Tool](#).



Transition to scale and scale stages: replication and/or adaptation across large geographies and populations for transformational impact, followed by the innovation being adopted at the desired level and sustained by an ecosystem of actors. Example of tools: Nested/Hybrid Evaluation.



Systems innovations: when business-as-usual solutions are not enough, systems innovations set out to transform the underlying structures that have led to the problem by addressing both technical (e.g. infrastructure) and socio-institutional (e.g. behaviours) factors, enabling shifts from one system to another. This requires coordinated interventions, interdisciplinary approaches, multi-actor collaboration and ongoing adaptation to drive long-term, systemic change. Example of tools: [Systems Mapping using KUMU](#)

KEY RESOURCES

We invite the MEL community and innovators within and beyond UNICEF to leverage the 5D Innovation Framework and the Innovation MEL Toolbox in their work. To do so, please find the key resources here:

- Innovation MEL Toolbox: <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/reports/innovation-mel-toolbox> (which also includes links to Tools Repository and templates and facilitation tools on Miro)
- 5D Innovation Framework: <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/reports/5d-innovation-framework>
- 5D Innovation Framework web-assessment tool: <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/reports/5-dimensional-web-assessment-tools>

CONTACT US

For more information, please reach out to the Insights team at OOI: <https://www.unicef.org/innovation/evidence>

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