Measuring Progress in Fields:
Reflections & Opportunities

October 2021

If you are reading this piece, you are probably a part of multiple "fields" in your professional affiliation and avocations or hobbies. Fields are a collection. They are full of "diverse, interdependent organizations that participate in a common meaning system."[1] They form and exist to "solve a common set of problems, develop a common body of theory and knowledge, or advance and apply common practices."[2] Field efforts happen across different content areas, geographies, and scales of change.

Those doing the day-to-day work of birthing, shepherding, and advancing fields work toward a vision they have of how the world could be improved through aligning and coordinating. Funders often support fields to help advance their own missions in ways that can achieve change at scale and be sustained over time. Evaluators and researchers seek to help both field builders and funders understand progress and support learning and improvement. As part of our follow-up work to our *Not Always Movements* brief[3] and its accompanying , **we worked with a group of colleagues representing evaluators, funders, and field actors across a range of geographic and subject area foci to tackle a few key questions:**

- What are existing resources about field concepts and measurement?
- What opportunities exist for filling gaps or fostering further innovation related to measurement of fields?
- How can we usefully share resources and encourage the pursuit of opportunities to fill identified gaps and strengthen measurement of fields?

[1] Scott, W. R. (1995). *Institutions and organizations*. Sage.

[2] O'Neil, Kevin. 2015. "How do you Build a Field? Lessons from Public Health." Rockefeller Foundation, November 18. https://www. rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/how-do-you-build-a-field-lessonsfrom-public-health/

[3] This brief aimed to elucidate distinct pathways, assumptions, and potential outcomes for different approaches to large-scale social change that often get conflated with movements.

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With increased activity and investment around fields in the social sector, we think the moment is ripe to revisit and advance the tools, concepts, and approaches for learning about field building, understanding progress, and supporting ongoing improvement and iteration. This brief is for anyone who has wished for better conceptual understanding about fields—especially how learning and evaluation of this type of work could be more helpful and more nuanced.

This document shares insights and hypotheses that emerged from discussions among the group of people who participated in two facilitated sessions in June 2021.[4] **We organized key points into two categories:**

Practices with potential to be taken up and applied by funders, evaluators, and field actors to strengthen evaluation and learning for field-focused efforts today[5]

Opportunities for further creativity, development, and advancement of field-focused measurement going forward

Key Points: Overview

Practices with Potential to Improve Evaluation and Learning	Opportunities for Further Creativity and Development
• Differentiate between *types* of fields • Clarify and align around *what* you want to learn more about • Intentionally focus on equity, race, and power in how the field is developed, functioning, and producing outcomes • Promote and measure outcomes related to trust and relationships • Draw on and utilize a broad suite of measurement approaches from across disciplines	• More examples for understanding how fields develop and evolve • More application of complexity and systems thinking in this work • More clarity about learning and evaluation interests among field members and those ultimately impacted • More ongoing learning and sharing related to field concepts and measurement

[4] Three people who were invited to participate in the June 2021 think tank sessions could not attend. These individuals agreed to provide input after the fact, which also helped to inform this brief. See Appendix A for additional information.

[5] We think these practices can also be built upon, improved, and taken further, but we also think there are some more concrete ideas that could get immediate traction that we are highlighting here.

Grounding Concepts

To promote productive discussion during the think tank and avoid getting mired by language differences, we laid out a few core definitions and concepts as a common reference point. We share this here as additional context for the discussions and insights that followed.

What is a field?

In *Not Always Movements*, we noted that **a field is "a community of organizations and individuals working together to solve a common set of problems, develop a common body of theory and knowledge, or advance and apply common practices."**[6]

Scott offers a similar definition: "[a field is] a collection of diverse, interdependent organizations that participate in a common meaning system."7

Field Characteristics

Many will be familiar with **the characteristics of fields** described by the Bridgespan Group in *The Strong Field Framework* and in more recent work around field building.[8]

- **Knowledge base**: The body of academic and/or practical research that informs or propels the field
- **Complementary actors**: Those who actively identify as part of the field, including leaders and other participants
- **Field-level agenda**: Critical approaches to addressing barriers or challenges in the field and/or developing and pursuing solutions
- **Infrastructure**: Connections, entities, or defined roles that support the range of field activities, including technical assistance, pooling funds, hosting convenings, and so forth
- **Resources**: Financial and nonfinancial supports that enable or enhance the work of the field

[6] O'Neil, Kevin. 2015. "How do you Build a Field? Lessons from Public Health." Rockefeller Foundation, November 18. https://www. rockefellerfoundation.org/blog/how-do-you-build-a-field-lessonsfrom-public-health/

[7] Scott, W. R. (1995). *Institutions and organizations*. Sage.

[8] See The James Irvine Foundation & The Bridgespan Group. (2009). The Strong Field Framework. https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/the-strong-field-framework-a-guide-and-toolkit-for and The Bridgespan Group. (2020). Field Building for Population Level Change. https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/field-building-for-population-level-change

The Innovation Network for Communities identified **unique characteristics based on the different stages of a field's development.**[9]

Stage	Characteristics
Framing	Conceptual framing of the field and isolated practice examples
Networking	Networking by innovators and proliferation of practices; fragmented practices, often considered proprietary
Maturation	Maturation of practices, convergence around common methods and tools, integration of previously differentiated practices, development of professional implementation support networks
Standardization	Highly standardized practices, incorporated into formal training, credentialing, and certification systems; practices are considered "commodities;" reward systems reinforce desired behaviors

Types of Fields

Zeitsma et al. distinguish between **two different types of fields**:[10]

1. **Exchange fields:** "Contain a focal population of actors and their interaction or exchange partners (suppliers, customers, etc.). Within exchange fields, members are more likely to share practices and norms, common meaning systems, and references to a common identify."
2. **Issue fields**: Fields formed around issues rather than exchange relationships. The purpose or focus of these fields is to negotiate, govern and/or compete over meanings and practices that affect multiple fields. Issue fields typically contain the most diverse set of actors and are more "contested and dynamic in contrast to institutional fields."

[9] Innovation Network for Communities. (2009). *Fields, innovations, and places: Three different strategies for social innovators*. Available at https://in4c.net/download/fields-innovations-places/

[10] Zeistma, C., Groenewegen, P., Logue, D., & Hinings, C. R. (2016, October 25). Field or fields? Building the scaffolding for cumulation of research on institutional fields. *Academy of Management Annals, 11*(1), 391–450. Available at https://doi.org/10.5465/annals.2014.0052

What is field building?

Field building comprises activities aimed at developing, aligning, or expanding the work of multiple actors to advance broad outcomes in a specialized area of practice.

Bridgespan describes field building as "the activities or investments that drive a field's progress toward impact at scale," including those aimed at strengthening organizations and those aimed at strengthening connections or collaboration among field actors.

Field-building activities may include the following:

- Establishing common vocabulary, new shared norms and narratives, proof points, and promising practices
- Generating a relevant body of research and evidence to clarify, guide, and support practice
- Strengthening organizational and professional development systems
- Fostering alignment among a wide spectrum of actors (including researchers, advocates, communications professionals, practitioners, policymakers, funders, and others) to facilitate the shared development of norms and practices and ensure they are put into action and advanced in a complementary and coordinated way over time

A **key assumption** underlying field building as an approach to advance social change is that well-established and commonly held ideas, methods, tools, and practices that are (1) regularly renewed and (2) collectively applied by a group of actors with shared identity can help to create the conditions for broad and durable social impact.

A few important notes:

Language always matters.

During our think tank sessions, we had fulsome conversation about the words we used in framing the issue and understanding problems and solutions. Words carry meaning and history beyond their definitions, and we share some of this context for the benefit of those engaging in this ongoing work.

- Terminology associated with field building: We recognized that the term "field building," widely used as shorthand for all sorts of field-focused investments, is not always an accurate descriptor. Use of this term can cause harm—especially if it erroneously conveys an assumption that a field lacks strengths/has certain deficits or implies that something is being "built from scratch," which has the potential to devalue or colonize/gentrify existing efforts. Moreover, think tank participants noted that "building" is just one way to support fields and their work; too little support goes to the important work of maintaining, sustaining, and reinvigorating fields over time.

  Participants also reflected on the terminology around "field maturation," noting that the term suggests fields have linear development and a fixed or ideal end state though in reality, fields change and develop in inherently iterative and nonlinear ways. While we appreciate that the term field building is imperfect, it is also in common use, and there are not clear alternatives. For the purposes of this brief, when the term field building is used, we mean any effort to develop, align, expand, or otherwise support a field, its organization, its pursuits, and its goal advancement.

- Terminology associated with measurement: During think tank sessions, participants noted that terminology associated with measurement can also lead to narrow, deficit-based, accountability focused mental models. Sometimes people reacted to this language because of a tendency for those "measuring" to focus on simplistic, static metrics as the means to indicate success or failure of a complex social change effort when, in truth, such metrics are often mismatched to the complexity of these efforts. Others noted the historic ways in which measurement has been used against communities of color to uphold white supremacist culture. We have opted to use alternative language (e.g., learning, understanding progress, evaluation) to avoid a term that carries heavy baggage.

This work is not neutral; we must make choices that advance equity and work against ongoing oppressions.

ORS Impact, the conveners of the think tank, and the authors of this piece believe that field-focused work and the evaluation of that work are not neutral, values-free acts. We know that many Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) and marginalized communities have been harmed by past (biased) evaluation and data collection efforts and that efforts that do not explicitly aim toward equity are likely to reinforce the status quo and white supremacist culture. In organizing the think tank and preparing this summary, we intentionally sought to "do more good and less harm." As such, we believe the following are necessary actions to strengthen inquiry around fields and field building:

- we must wrestle with questions of equity, power, and oppression in the design, selection of outcomes, and identification of impact; and
- evaluators, funders, and field actors have a role to play in actively working against systemic discrimination and bias—including that based on race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, ability, family structure, and so forth.

This is an addition, not an end, to an ongoing conversation in this space.

While two sessions allowed us to surface some important themes and ideas, this piece certainly does not reflect a comprehensive accounting of all issues and opportunities for advancing the evaluation and support of field efforts. Much more can be done, including but not limited to publishing case stories or other kinds of descriptions of good field-focused evaluation efforts and development of more practical frameworks or tools.

Practices with Potential to Improve Evaluation and Learning

We think that if funders and evaluators strengthen their conceptualization and understanding about fields, then there is a greater likelihood that fields and field builders could better contribute to and advance broad, equitable social impact. Think tank participants concurred. The following key insights emerged from our conversations.

Differentiate between *types* of fields

The most common frameworks and concepts used in field building (e.g., *The Strong Field Framework* and stages of field maturation) generally apply to one type of field. While these frames and concepts are useful for exchange fields (described further, following), they are somewhat mismatched for other types of fields. More facility with field types and concepts would help with effective alignment, support, and learning opportunities across field builders, funders, and evaluators.

Types of fields that may be useful to have more familiarity with include the following:

- Exchange fields: Exchange fields, which center around a focal "population" of actors and the partners with which they interact (be that within industry, professional, or social change spaces) tend to be geared toward "stabiliz[ing] and coordinat[ing] exchange, membership in networks, and compatible practices."[11] In this case, particular populations are expected to share practices and norms, a common identity, and so forth.
- Issue fields: In other cases, fields form around specific issues (hence "issue fields") and contain a diverse set of actors who "interact and take each other into account" as they negotiate, govern and/or compete over meanings and practices; issues fields are therefore also more likely to be contested and dynamic, particularly over values.
- Advocacy fields: Unlike other types of fields, advocacy fields are not rooted in common standards or codified practice; instead, the strength and effectiveness of a field may be correlated with its composition, the degree of connectivity among field actors, and the field's adaptive capacity.

11 Zietsma, C., Groenewegen, P., Logue, D. M., & Hinings, C. R. (2017). Field or fields? Building the scaffolding for cumulation of research on institutional fields. Academy of Management Annals, 11(1), 391-450.

While it could feel pedantic to differentiate field types, blanket use of the term "field" can sometimes obscure helpful conceptual distinctions between different types of fields. For example, the work that must be done to ensure a well-functioning field differs dramatically depending on the type of field: issue fields typically require much more work to enable field participants to understand and respect one another and others' values, while exchange fields typically build from common vocabulary, practices, and values. While the objective in exchange fields might be reaching consensus on practices and values, in issue fields, the objective is more likely to be about respect for differences and negotiation of rights and responsibilities despite those differences. And in advocacy fields, the objective may be to ensure representation of different roles or areas of expertise and achieving consensus about how those with different roles contribute to a collective effort.

Stronger clarity about the type of field will mean better understanding if/how certain frameworks are relevant or how best to think about what constitutes a strong, well-functioning field. Application of the most useful field frames or concepts can help those learning about the fields to gain greater insights and benefits from measurement—for example, better accounting for differences in things like amount of convergence across field actors and the most useful infrastructure elements.

Clarify and align around *what* you want to learn more about

In defining the focus of learning and evaluation, it is possible to get tangled up about what you are actually trying to learn about. Because of the nature of fields, there are multiple domains that can be of interest. We propose differentiating between four domains.

Domain	Focus/Assumptions
The field itself	If the goal or strategy aims to form, build, grow, or strengthen a field, then it can be important to understand the characteristics of the field and/or how these characteristics reflect the field's beneficial development, evolution, or structure. In other words, a focus on the field itself is about (1) understanding a field's status relative to characteristics that are assumed to be important or necessary—for example, stage of development, the strength of connections among field members, or the flow of information; and/or (2) determining the ways in which fields can best be supported—for example, support for equitable formation and structures and practices that consider power and maintain equity.
Field actors, either organizations or individuals	Learning and evaluation may also focus on changes or benefits for individual field actors from their engagement in the field—for example, changes in knowledge or leadership development or the ways in which field actors take key ideas, values, or a field's ethos to new endeavors, even if they leave the field. If the field is comprised of organizations, measurement might focus on the degree to which ideas, values, or common practices have been institutionalized or the ways in which widespread adoption of certain behaviors or practices are manifest across a field.
Effectiveness of a field's efforts	Fields exist to do or change something—for example, generate knowledge, strengthen the relationships between certain actors, influence the uptake of key practices, and so forth. Evaluation in this domain might focus on identification and tracking of a field's efforts (are they happening as planned?) or outcomes expected to result from the actions of field members.
The field's impact on a long-term, large-scale mission/vision	Beyond their immediate efforts and results, fields seek to advance an ultimate (ambitious, large-scale) purpose: to realize benefits for a community or environment, directly or indirectly, over time. Evaluation might focus on understanding how field-driven efforts contribute to end goals; what are overlapping contributions within a broader set of field-driven efforts or across different social change initiatives; or how the external environment is influencing advancement of the desired end goal.

Clarifying where there is interest and why and when change would be expected will help all those involved have greater alignment.

Intentionally focus on equity, race, and power in how the field is developed, functioning, and producing outcomes

Field builders, funders, and evaluators must explicitly and proactively consider power and equity issues in their field-related work. This is true whether fields are in the early stages of formation or are more developed and regardless of the field focus, outcomes being sought, or intended impact.

We sometimes find it useful to think about equity as both a noun and a verb. As a noun, equity speaks to what the field is hoping to *achieve*—that is, its outcomes around things like practice changes, norms, priorities, policies, or the conditions experienced by individuals or populations. As a verb, equity speaks to *how fields take shape*: who is invited to or included in the field, who holds power and has legitimacy, and who is supported. Building from earlier thinking, this list of reflective questions for fields may provide a useful starting point for deeper interrogation of these issues:

- How does the field define/understand equity? Has the field acknowledged and/or made commitments to focus on systemic dimensions of equity or upstream drivers of inequity? What are strengths and limitations about the ways that the field conceptualizes or understands equity?
- To what extent has race, privilege, and oppression been explicitly and openly addressed within the field's formation, structure, ways of working, and outcomes? For fields with longer tenures, how is the field reckoning with making changes, unlearning old ways, and addressing past harms?
- Who sets the goals, agenda, major initiatives, or priorities of the field? Who defines the identity of a field or sets standards of quality? Who receives funding or other support to participate or add to a field (e.g., produce research, build skills)?
- To what extent do the field's goals, initiatives, priorities, identity, standards, and/or funding explicitly address or respond to issues of race and equity? Who is involved in helping to shape how they address these issues? To what extent are those ultimately impacted included in understanding issues and solutions?
- Who is part of field discussions that lead to major decisions affecting the field's structure, ways of working, or its effectiveness and impact? Do these discussions happen in open, transparent ways or are they exclusive and hidden? If the latter, what enables or disrupts this dynamic? How does the field's structure confer or limit the power of different actors?
- How do the primary funders that support the field's work promote equity or maintain inequitable systems? Does funding help to engage or support a diverse range of participants or beneficiaries? Are there people who have been historically oppressed that need different or additional supports/capacities to participate fully?

Nothing about fields and their work is neutral. Without actively and intentionally attending to issues of equity, power, oppression, and inequities, field efforts and measurement will almost certainly uphold the status quo, where opportunity, access, and outcomes are too often defined by one's race, class, gender, or other identities. For fields to do good, there is an obligation to disrupt traditional power dynamics that reinforce systemic privilege and oppression. If in the early stages of field development, questions such as those outlined above get regularly asked, then equity and power considerations may be more readily baked into field efforts and shape the values, ways of operating, and outcomes. In cases where fields are mature or have more solidified structures, practices, or norms, it may be important to consider ways to examine and adjust existing structures or patterns to better recognize and reverse racial or other biases.

Promote and measure outcomes related to trust and relationships

While the focus on field frames and concepts may make fields feel like knowable, fundable objects, the truth is that fields are made up of people, in all their complexity. While current frameworks point to facets such as shared identity and values, there is opportunity to more explicitly attend to some key elements that critically impact field development, growth, and efficacy:

- The relationships and ties between people
- The nature of relationships, such as beneficial reciprocation (i.e., you scratch my back, I'll scratch yours) or the intent to minimize the cost or effort of engagement (i.e., preference for relationships with those who are similar)
- Levels of trust between members
- Sense of community
- Feelings of inclusion

The experiences of those within a field matter. Individual experiences within a field can affect who stays in and who leaves, who steps up and who feels marginalized, and ultimately, how equitably or effectively the field functions. Individuals' ability to connect, convene, evolve, and contribute has important effects on fields: how fast they move (e.g., "at the speed of trust"), how much they benefit from all those who may (or could) see themselves as part of the field, how inclusive and welcoming fields feel, and more. When examining how connectivity and trust are present, it is important to also consider the field's history and context and if/how field structures or norms enable or impede individuals from connecting or engaging in certain ways.

We think more intentional delineation of connectivity and trust and inclusion of these dimensions of a field in measurement, learning, and evaluation could help convey and legitimize their

importance and better contextualize field progress. Failure to recognize and orient toward the interpersonal aspects of field building ultimately treats fields as too much of a technical intervention. Without sufficiently attending to this aspect of a field, we believe it is easy to miss important contextual information that could better support learning and continuous improvement. This is especially the case in issue fields, where field members are more diverse, as well as when beneficiaries are explicitly included in field processes.

Draw on and utilize a broad suite of measurement and approaches from across disciplines

Our cross-disciplinary conversation highlighted those involved in the measurement of fields could usefully learn and benefit from approaches to measurement being carried out in other spaces. Experiences measuring other related or relevant types of work can also help us avoid known mistakes and better center considerations of power and equity in how we approach field measurement and learning. There is also the chance that cross-fertilization and bringing different ideas together will spur greater innovation, which has the potential to strengthen all approaches. While there are some useful documented concepts about fields that can guide measurement, there are also opportunities to draw and build upon broader frameworks, tools, and methods to support measurement of different elements of a field's development and efforts:[12]

- Methods or approaches relevant to measuring **strategic communications and narrative change,** which help to elucidate how and how much a topic is being talked about or what language is being used, might be useful in understand the extent to which a field-level agenda, a sense of shared identity, or coalescence around language or ideas is emerging.
- **Social network analysis** can be useful for understanding and illuminating the actors involved in a field and the relationships between them, particularly when used in tandem with other participatory methods that can help to articulate who is expected to be in the network, what role they play, and the purpose of building connections.
- **Organizational life cycle frameworks** might be useful in thinking through stages of field development and what you might expect to see at each, although with the caveat that these too may need to be amended to account for the nonlinearity of field-building efforts. We might also draw on different ways of knowing in how we approach field measurement across its different domains—for instance, drawing on storytelling approaches as a means of understanding a field's progress and impact.

[12] Jewlya Lynn's piece, "Assessing and evaluating change in advocacy fields" has a number of methodological options for different facets of an advocacy field: https://www.evaluationinnovation.org/publication/assessing-and-evaluation-change-in-advocacy-fields/

Opportunities for Further Creativity and Development

As described in the preceding section, the think tank sessions helped to surface some concrete ideas that have the potential to push collective thinking and practices beyond the status quo. While there is also room to iterate and innovate on those ideas, the ideas that follow represent what we think are near-term opportunities for useful experimentation, innovation, and sharing to help advance field-focused evaluation.

More examples for understanding how fields develop and evolve

In our discussions, we realized our shared stories and mental models around fields are limited. There is great opportunity to expand and develop more understanding about the different ways in which fields emerge and evolve over time—for example, how fields come into being, change in terms of their infrastructure or form, merge with or get subsumed by other fields, and/or dissolve. For example, a move to develop a subfield around youth-led evaluation didn't seek to create a new freestanding effort, rather, the early shapers hoped to change the broader evaluation field such that a youth-led branch no longer needed to exist.

Relatedly, think tank members raised questions about how to understand life cycles and evolutions of fields specifically for strategy and evaluation purposes. At what moments or inflection points is it particularly helpful to understand the characteristics of a field, the field's growth/development/change, and the field's impact? Having more case studies, lessons learned, or literature review about field inflection points and what they mean for measurement and learning could help ensure that evaluations ask salient questions at the right times and commissioners of evaluation know when it is most reasonable or likely to see certain kinds of change and development. Having more models to understand fields' evolutions could help inform field development and support as well as measurement.

Potential Actions:	Case studies, literature reviews, public-facing evaluations of fields

More application of complexity and systems frames in this work

Discussion during the two sessions surfaced opportunities to more explicitly place the work and measurement of fields within frames that acknowledge complexity and encourage systems thinking.

Fields themselves are complex systems and subject to shifts that stem from external factors or events and cross-field effects. Applying a systems lens to the evaluation of fields across domains would mean explicit exploration of the structures, boundaries, relationships, evolutions, and interdependencies within the field as well as inquiry into how those things interact or are influenced by systems external to the field. Using systems thinking means evaluators need to look not just at what fields intend to do and achieve but also at unintended effects as well as how fields are shifting/evolving/adapting as a system (e.g., field is changing all together, only parts of a field are changing, field is reforming itself as a system).

Doing so can mitigate a pitfall: (falsely) conceptualizing field work/changes with too much linearity, rigidity, precision, and certainty. There is an opportunity to more meaningfully recognize the fluidity and nonlinearity of field efforts, including change that moves forward and backward, different impact models (e.g., positive change does not just manifest as "upward" change), and the influence of external factors/environment on how fields develop, change over time, and advance goals. A hypothesis is that if there is more explicit and deeper thinking about complexity and a systems orientation in the context of fields rather than adhering to false notions about simplicity or precision, then evaluation and measurement will be truer to how fields really work.

Potential Actions:	More examples of systems/complexity application in evaluation; more engagement with leaders in systems/complexity thinking in ongoing conversations; more explicit inclusion of systems/complexity thinking in existing frameworks and tools

More clarity about learning and evaluation interests among field members and those ultimately impacted

Current measurement status quo tends to prioritize and address funders' interests and needs. For example, funders may prescribe the outcomes that a field should achieve without giving sufficient space for discovery, with the field, about current status in the field's evolution or stage of work, what is on the horizon, and what types of changes are most likely to make a difference. There is opportunity for all field actors—funders, evaluators, those involved in fields—to more intentionally investigate and clarify if/how funders' interests may converge (or diverge) with the interests of field members and those that fields ultimately benefit or harm. And as funders often

focus on field-specific outcomes, field actors observed that there is limited infrastructure and mechanisms for learning either within or across fields, leading to loss of key insights and needless reinvention of the wheel.

While we sought a cross-section of think tank participants: field builders, evaluators, researchers, and funders (and we had participation from many who had worn many of these hats at various points in time), more work is needed to surface and clarify what kinds of questions field members and their constituents actually have and what they want and need from measurement and related systematic inquiry. Clarifying field members' and constituents' needs and interests could ensure that evaluation and learning choices are inclusive and responsive. More intentional considerations about benefits and potential harms of field-focused work and measurement and use of evaluation/measurement models and frames that promote inclusiveness are culturally responsive, anti-racist, and promote equity—for example, participatory methods and the Equitable Evaluation Framework.

Potential Actions:	Targeted inquiry among field leaders/members and field beneficiaries about their learning and evaluation needs and interests, more examples of evaluations that are responsive to field and field constituent needs

More ongoing learning and sharing related to field concepts and measurement

There is a desire for more community among those with different roles/perches related to measurement in fields and more/stronger bridges between emerging academic ideas and actual identifiable advancements about fields, regarding both field development as well as measurement and philanthropic strategy. There was more interest in the think tank than we could accommodate, and there is interest among those who did participate in continuing conversation and some kind of community of practice around this work. More venues or ways of fostering development around this topic could help yield greater creativity and innovation than if all parties keep working independently going forward.

Potential Actions:	Reconvening of interested parties, more support for diverse evaluators and researchers to contribute to knowledge building in this area, support for a community of practice among a set of stakeholders.

Conclusion

This work can feel very meta: we need a stronger field to better measure and assure strong fields. Yet many people in different seats—academics, funders, field builders, evaluators, and more—have been wrestling with questions about how to describe this work, understand progress, provide effective strategies and supports, and learn and improve along the way. Too rarely does this range of interested people come together. The breadth of where fields are relevant—across topic areas, geographies, at different levels of scale, and more—means that this work has too often been siloed in various parts of the social sector. We hope this think tank is just a start to more conversation, innovation, and ways in which strategy, learning, and evaluation in this space can better hold nuance, advance equity, serve a variety of audiences and purposes, and spark more collaboration and advances in this aspect of large-scale social change approaches.

APPENDIX A:

Think Tank Process and Participants

Over a few weeks between March and May 2021, ORS Impact sought participants for the think tank through three means:

1. Soliciting suggestions from colleagues in the field
2. Identifying key leaders who were invited to participate
3. Asking for nominations through an open call process advertised online through social media as well as the *Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy* (EPIP) newsletter

Our criteria for selecting participants included the following:

- We sought a mix of backgrounds, accounting for role (i.e., funder, evaluator, field actor), range of foci (e.g., subject matter and geographic focus of work), and personal characteristics (e.g., age, gender, race/ethnicity).
- We leaned slightly toward those who self-nominated.
- Those who self-nominated also rated their experience; we also leaned toward those who self-rated themselves as more experienced.
- We wanted to keep the group to 12 to 15 participants to allow for active participation in a virtual space.

Those who accepted an invitation to participate were asked to (1) join a 45-minute interview ahead of the think tank sessions, (2) review a few advance materials, (3) and participate in two 2-hour virtual group meetings. Participants were offered an honorarium in recognition of their time. Think tank participants included the following:

- Marcia Coné, director of Practice Management and Evolution, Equitable Evaluation Initiatives
- Rachel Estrella, senior associate, Social Policy Research Associates
- Karim Harji, program director, Oxford Impact Measurement Program, Said Business School, University of Oxford; general partner, Possibilian Ventures; managing director, Evalysis
- Irit Houvras, director for Strategic Learning, Research, and Evaluation, American Jewish World Service
- September Jarrett, officer, Education Program, Heising-Simons Foundation

- Mike McCreless, head of Investor Collaboration, Impact Management Project
- Alison McNeil, founder and chief creative officer, McNeil Creative Enterprises
- Robert Medina, program officer, English Learner Initiative, Sobrato Family Foundation
- Emma Nothmann, principal, the Bridgespan Group
- Erika Takada, senior consultant, Engage R&D
- Mandy Van Deven, philanthropy consultant
- Hanh Cao Yu, chief learning officer, the California Endowment
- Charlene Zietsma, professor, John & Becky Surma Dean's Research Fellow, Management and Organization, Smeal College of Business, Pennsylvania State University

All think tank participants were also invited to review and provide feedback on this product, if they desired. Three individuals were not able to participate in the think tank sessions though they offered to review and provide input and comments on a draft of this piece. These included the following:

- Marta Arranz, Oak Foundation
- Adriana Loson-Ceballos, EPIP, director of Network Resources
- Jewlya Lynn, founder and principal, Policy Solve; formerly founder and CEO, Spark Policy Institute

While we benefited greatly from every individual's participation, engagement, and input, ORS Impact takes full responsibility for the content of this piece.

APPENDIX B:

Exploring Field-Building Concepts and Measurement Think Tank:

Resources Identified by Participants

Field-building cases

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