

# ASPIRe FIELDBOOK

*A guide to leveraging platforms  
for impact at scale*

2022 EDITION

ASPIRe  
AN ASHOKA & SOCIETAL PLATFORM INITIATIVE



societal  
PLATFORM



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## ASPIRe Fellows and their Mission Teams

This fieldbook would not be possible without Ashoka Fellows and their teams who joined us on a daring journey of imagining platforms for the “good of all” with the ASPIRe accelerator. The fellows and their teams applied these tools and exercises over a 6-month intensive process and provided us invaluable feedback and inputs which enabled us to produce this fieldbook.

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Our gratitude to Sascha Hazelmayer and Rizwan Tayabali for their rigorous review and generous contributions.

*This fieldbook is a work-in-progress; an initial attempt to capture our experience and knowledge as it is emerging, so it can be used, improved and re-iterated with all your help and support to enhance future editions. Write to us with your feedback, comments and ideas at [projectaspire@ashoka.org](mailto:projectaspire@ashoka.org). We are counting on you!*

# ASPIRe FIELDBOOK

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## FOREWORD

This fieldbook has been written for social innovators interested in exploring how to build platforms for system change. We have seen that when designed and governed deliberately for 'the good of all,' platforms hold a powerful promise for activating agency on a large scale and advancing an 'Everyone a Changemaker' world: one that responds quickly and effectively to social challenges, and where each individual has the freedom, confidence and societal support to address any social problem and self-identify as a driver of change.

Social entrepreneurs would do well to become familiar with these new tools and models to be able to influence how platforms are designed, implemented, and applied to serve 'the good of all.' It is important for them to understand the ways in which technology can empower or disempower society so that they are able to safeguard and maximize their role as innovators.

Platforms have already irreversibly changed the way businesses operate and we anticipate that the citizen sector will also turn to them as a pathway to exponential scale and thus, impact. We have seen how platforms can activate agency and orchestrate networks that exchange value and use data to learn, evolving rapidly in response, creating conditions for system change at scale with efficiency and speed.

However, building platforms is a challenging and expensive proposition for social entrepreneurs. It is a risky, difficult, and time-intensive endeavour that requires significant in-house tech-savviness and high capital investment. Both aspects, in our experience, have proven to be stumbling blocks for social entrepreneurs to leverage these new tools and models to effect. In addition, like in any emerging field, there are still many questions, no proven playbooks, and only a few demonstrated successes. To address this need we have started developing a practice and a body of knowledge around platforms for 'the good of all' and how they can be leveraged by social entrepreneurs. This fieldbook is a synthesis of our learnings from supporting 20 Ashoka Fellows for 2 years through the ASPIRe Accelerator. It is a practical guide for developing a platform strategy for exponential social impact.

To complement this fieldbook, we have also developed a report with know-how and practical insights from the work of some Ashoka Fellows who are using platforms to solve large societal problems at scale, '*Leveraging Platforms for the Good of All: Insights from Leading Social Entrepreneurs.*' To learn more about Ashoka's broader work in creating an ecosystem of players to bridge the gap between technology and society, we recommend that you also take a look at Ashoka's Tech and Humanity Initiative.

Whether you are contemplating incorporating a platform strategy or are in the midst of building one, we hope you will find this fieldbook useful.

**Maria Zapata**  
Executive Director ASPIRe and Globalizer Co-Director, Ashoka

## FOREWORD

*"The only choice we have is to begin. And the only place to begin is where we are. Simply begin. But begin."*

Seth Godin, *The Practice: Shipping Creative Work*

Right intention is important. Following through with thoughtful action is wise. Change leaders combine intention and action to make a difference. We think, we act, we learn, and then we repeat. On this journey, ideas that inspire re-imagination, and tools that help us redesign, are valuable. Ideas and tools distilled from lived experiences are more so. They create the space for us to slow down and reflect. Sometimes, slowing down is the best way to speed up, especially when navigating difficult turns. This fieldbook presents such opportunities.

What is unique about this fieldbook? Well, nothing. But, what could be unique is the way we apply these ideas and tools to solve complex social problems with speed, at scale, and sustainably. Problems that have persisted, problems that shift, problems that have multiplied during the recent pandemic. This fieldbook may help us co-create responses that grow faster than the problems that we aspire to solve. It may bring us together as an ecosystem.

This fieldbook is an attempt to blend the pragmatism of experience and the logical structure of theory. The tools and methods that we will meet over the unfolding pages are rooted in core values and design principles of Societal Thinking. The potential of these tools cannot be realised if we limit their use to individual reflection. We may want to use them with our teams, or even better, with our partners and well-wishers. Solving together beats solving alone, anyday.

Let us sense, make sense and solve to outsmart the complexity of our challenges. Let us use this fieldbook to begin where we are and pace towards where we desire to be.

**Sanjay Purohit**  
Chief Curator, Societal Platform

# INTRODUCTION

## About this fieldbook

The ASPIRe Fieldbook is a manifestation of our learnings, drawn from multiple iterations of our accelerator programme – ASPIRe. ASPIRe is a partnership between Societal Platform and Ashoka that seeks to explore and learn how platforms can be leveraged by social entrepreneurs to support system change work and bring their impact to scale. This DIY practical guide seeks to equip social entrepreneurs like you, with proven design principles and best practices, to design for impact at scale, by enabling co-creation, building networks, and developing open digital infrastructure.

As opposed to platforms-for-profit, designing platforms-for-impact involves different design principles, approaches and success measures. Hence, we felt the need to develop and share this fieldbook with the broader ecosystem. It will help you unlock the potential of digital platforms and technology – its potential to simplify access to problem-solving abilities, amplify co-creation across the ecosystem and thereby catalyse exponential societal change.

## Who should use this fieldbook

This fieldbook will be useful to anyone who is looking to create social impact at an exponential scale and is evaluating how a platform can help them achieve this aim. This includes, but is not limited to social entrepreneurs, CSR leaders, multilateral organisations, foundations and governments. We have learnt that while the platform approach holds the promise of high impact, it comes with several risks: it is demanding, expensive and challenging. This fieldbook will help you reflect and evaluate the opportunities and risks, and if you decide to pursue that route, develop a platforms-for-impact strategy.

## How to use this fieldbook?

All modules in this fieldbook move from the conceptual to the practical. Each module begins by introducing the reader to a concept or a framework, followed by actionable exercises with clear outcomes. At the end of each module, readers are provided with a space for reflecting upon their learnings. The module structure is as follows:

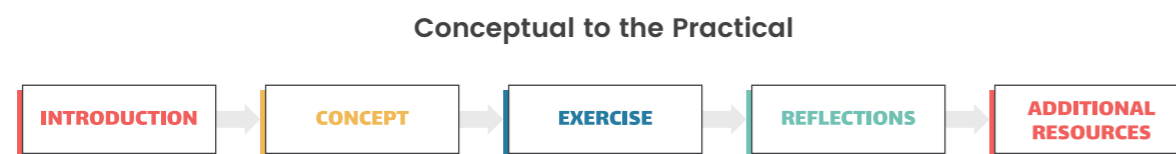


Figure 1: Module Components



### Tips for engaging with this fieldbook:

- Engaging with this fieldbook requires team effort. In our experience, it is most productive when at least two or three team members work and think through the modules, and especially the exercises together. We highly recommend dedicating adequate time with all team members to meaningfully engage with this fieldbook and the platforms-for-impact journey.

- Engaging with this fieldbook does not require you to be a tech expert, but as your platform idea takes shape, tech expertise will add an important perspective to your thinking. If you don't have tech skills on your team already, you may want to collaborate with tech leaders while undertaking this journey. This has worked well for ASPIRe fellows in the past by bringing in valuable perspectives.
- The process of discovering a platform strategy is not linear, but iterative. This implies that you will keep returning to questions and artefacts of previous modules as you progress.
- If some exercises feel restrictive, you may feel free to skip them or substitute them. However, do keep an eye on the module outcomes and your level of clarity with them before proceeding.
- We have provided links and QR codes to the exercises in every module. We recommend accessing all exercises on a laptop or desktop (instead of a smartphone) for a better experience.

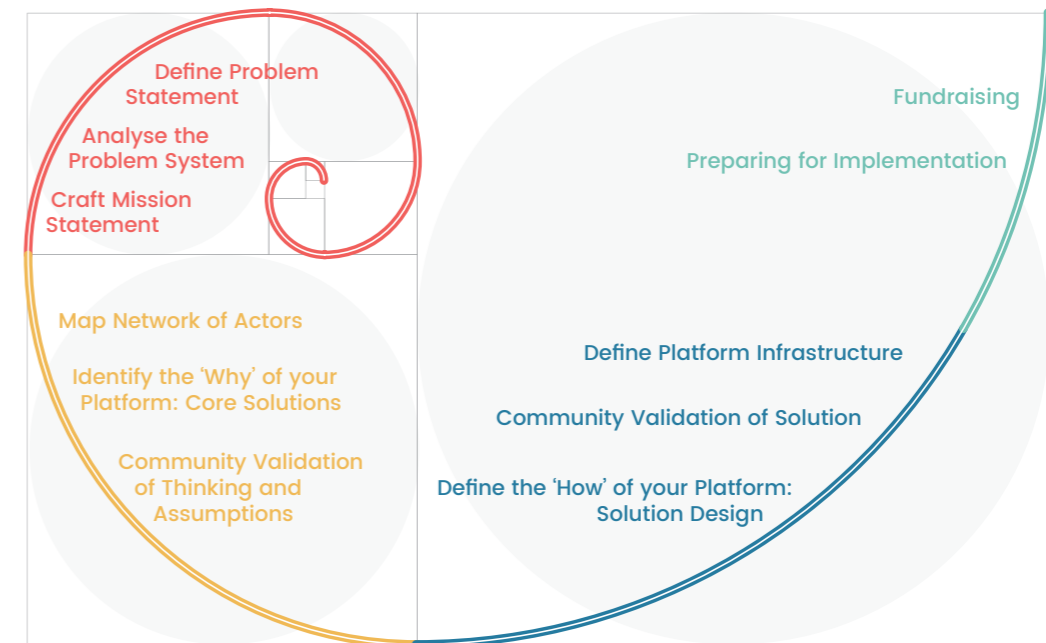


Figure 2: Journey through the fieldbook

## Anatomy of a digital platform

Since the advent of the internet, the term 'platform' has become a buzzword. However, platforms are not new. The twentieth century newspaper, for example, is a platform too. This is because, like digital platforms today, it is a type of forum that connects and caters to a multi-sided market, in other words to a network of diverse actors. For the traditional newspaper industry, the network of actors primarily comprise advertisers and readers; readers seek content, while advertisers seek attention. Revenue from advertising pays for the production of news content, which attracts readers, which in turn attracts more advertisers and so on and so forth.

Platforms, unlike traditional enterprises, do not create and deliver value to actors; instead, they orchestrate conditions such that actors create value on the platform for other actors to consume. The main purpose of platforms then, is to facilitate the exchange of this value between actors. A well-designed platform demonstrates the peculiar characteristics of network effects, namely that every new user makes the

platform more valuable to every other user. Simply put, platforms generate more and more value for each user as they scale. It is thus that the platform approach is most conducive to solving problems that exist at population scale.

### Platform Canvas

The canvas below breaks down the key components of a platform into clear segments. The platform in this case is the whole impact model and not just a piece of technology.

<b>PROBLEM STATEMENT</b> What is the problem? How many people are affected by the problem? Why does the problem exist and persist?		
<b>MISSION STATEMENT</b> What are the outcomes this mission is working towards?		
<b>ACTOR 1: VALUE CREATOR</b> Actor on the first side of the platform	<b>CORE INTERACTION:</b> Value exchange between Actor 1 and Actor 2 that can be repeated and orchestrated on the platform at scale	<b>ACTOR 2: VALUE CONSUMER</b> Actor on the second side of the platform
<b>VALUE PROPOSITION FOR ACTOR 1</b>		<b>VALUE PROPOSITION FOR ACTOR 2</b>
<b>SOLUTION:</b> How the platform facilitates value creation and exchange between actors	<b>PLATFORM FUNCTIONS</b> Tools and Services Audience building Matchmaking Rules and Standards	<b>NORTH STAR METRIC:</b> Key measure of Platform's impact
<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b> Technological and physical infrastructure required for the solution		
<b>RESOURCES</b> Human and capital resources required to develop and grow the platform		<b>ECOSYSTEM</b> Stakeholders apart from the two actors interacting on the platform, whom the mission needs to engage with in order to create the desired impact

ON THE PLATFORM

### Transitioning from Doer to Enabler Mindset

Platforms-for-impact thinking invites the practitioner to move from a *Doer* to an *Enabler* mindset. As opposed to the *Doer* mindset which seeks to deliver solutions, the *Enabler* mindset is focused on activating the agency of actors in a given system, and distributing the ability to solve the problem together. In our experience, the *Enabler* mindset is essential to designing a platform that brings about system and sustainable change, at scale.

Some key shifts should be attained in the transition from the *Doer* to *Enabler* mindset.

DOER: Direct Service	ENABLER: Indirect Impact & System Change
Scaling what works	Identifying what works at scale
Creating rapid growth	Enabling an equilibrium shift in the system
Distributing solutions	Distributing the ability to solve
Strengthening the organisation	Empowering the ecosystem
Facing diversity as a challenge	Understanding that diversity is the solution

### Core Design Principles of Platforms for Impact

We have observed that when deliberately designed for it, platforms orchestrate conditions for the creation of new roles for actors – individuals and institutions – and unlock their agency in becoming changemakers. By connecting large networks of actors in a continuous web of value creation and exchange, platforms help these networks get better and smarter at solving problems, and allow for exponential scaling and spreading of the system change.

The foundational design principles outlined in the table below are a useful point of reference when taking decisions about the design of the platform for system change, as well as the technology infrastructure that supports it.

#	Platform Design Principle	Explanation
1.	Unlock agency	Design solutions that allow for freedom of choice and the ability to act, particularly for those groups whose participation was earlier limited.
2.	Distribute the ability to solve	Design solutions that engage diverse stakeholders to solve the problem at scale in their contexts.
3.	Enable open value creation	Create conditions that allow for individuals and institutions to be connected in networks, to co-create and exchange value openly.
4.	Align towards better outcomes: System leadership	Help stakeholders in the system define and aim for a better set of outcomes than is currently being achieved.
5.	Catalyse interactions	Create new ways for stakeholders to connect and exchange value and become the self-propagating network of people and institutions that spread change.
6.	Build open public goods	Make scarce resources—knowledge, technology, expertise, connections, and data—openly (and thus abundantly) available.

#	Platform Design Principle	Explanation
7.	Empower with data and knowledge	Capture, analyse, and share data and insights in ways that enable all stakeholders to make better decisions as well as to anticipate and solve problems effectively.
8.	Seek rapid evolution	Design systems that can learn and evolve quickly in response to new and/or local challenges and opportunities.
9.	Cultivate the change offline <sup>1</sup>	Involve local leaders and build engaged networks on the ground to shift beliefs and behaviors and to assure culturally accepted, inclusive, and lasting change. While digital platforms allow certain interactions to reach scale quickly on a unified infrastructure, for behavioral change to take hold at scale it is essential to orchestrate change in local contexts.



### **Exercise 0: Align with the Core Design Principles**



We propose to use this reflective exercise as a first check-in to evaluate how you and your team are aligned to these nine Core Design Principles of platforms-for-impact and the principles that this fieldbook is grounded in. We believe that the principles are a continuum and not a destination, hence we invite you to self-assess where you stand today vis-à-vis these principles, how you perceive getting better at applying them in your work, as well as the value of such progress. If you find that the design principles are relevant to you and your team and that you aspire to apply them in practice, it is a good indicator to continue following this fieldbook.

<sup>1</sup> The **design principles** have been distilled by Societal Platform. Through ASPIRe we have adopted and modified them to reflect how these principles are manifested in the work of Social Entrepreneurs. (under [Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License](#)). To learn more about this refer to Ashoka's report "[Leveraging Platforms for the Good of All. Insights from leading Social Entrepreneurs.](#)"

1

**Understanding  
& Prioritising  
the Problem**



# INTRODUCTION

In this module, we first aim for you to identify the social problem that you wish to tackle and the larger context in which it is embedded i.e., the structural forces and systems that hold it in place. Upon identifying the problem, you will analyse the inner workings of the system/s that sustain it and that you would want to positively influence and change. Finally, you will define the mission or desired societal outcomes that you and your team will work towards.

In short, this module will help you:

- A. Identify your problem statement**
- B. Conduct systems analysis and,**
- C. Craft a compelling mission statement**

As indicated in the platform canvas below, as an outcome of this module you will be able to clearly define the highlighted blanks. Going forward, the problem and mission statement will guide every step in your journey towards realising the impact of your platform.

<b>PROBLEM STATEMENT</b>			
<b>MISSION STATEMENT</b>			
<b>ON THE PLATFORM</b>	<b>ACTOR 1: VALUE CREATOR</b>	<b>CORE INTERACTION</b>	<b>ACTOR 2: VALUE CONSUMER</b>
	<b>VALUE PROPOSITION FOR ACTOR 1</b>		<b>VALUE PROPOSITION FOR ACTOR 2</b>
	<b>SOLUTION</b>	<b>PLATFORM FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>NORTH STAR METRIC</b>
	<b>INFRASTRUCTURE</b>		
<b>RESOURCES</b>		<b>ECOSYSTEM</b>	

# A. IDENTIFY YOUR PROBLEM STATEMENT

In this section, you will gain deep insight into the societal problem you wish to tackle, including its root causes and consequences, all in keeping with the systems or structural forces that shape the problem. The outcome of this section will lead you to define your *problem statement*, which going forward, will be what your platform solution will continually seek to respond to.



## Concept of Problem Statement

A problem statement is a concise description of an issue or condition that you wish to improve upon. It explains *what* the problem is, *how* big the problem is and *why* it exists. Defining a watertight problem statement will, both, push you to gain a nuanced understanding of a given problem—its root causes and consequences—and to reflect upon your own preconceptions about it. Additionally, it will serve as a communication tool to garner buy-in from internal and external stakeholders who resonate with your problem.

A good problem statement concisely and precisely answers the following questions:

- *What is the problem?*
- *Why does it exist?*
- *How big is the problem?*

Typically, the *what* of a problem statement helps illustrate your claims about the problem at hand; the *why* comprise the reasons that support and bolster your claims about the problem—the root causes and the systems that perpetuate the problem; and the *how* big, reveals the magnitude and therefore significance of your chosen problem. The magnitude of the problem is particularly pertinent in the context of the platform approach, because by nature, platforms-for-impact are best suited to resolving large scale or population scale problems.

### Case Study

To better understand the constituent parts of a problem statement, let us consider and take apart an example of a problem statement. This problem statement was formulated by the [Healing Fields Foundation](#), an organisation founded by an Ashoka fellow, Mukti Bosco.

Problem Statement	System: Root Causes and Consequences
In India, women have a limited ability to access and hold health systems accountable ( <i>what</i> ). Globally, India accounts for 18% of deaths and 36% of deaths ( <i>how big</i> ) are due to communicable, nutritional, maternal, and perinatal diseases ( <i>why</i> ).	India has a scarcity of public health care infrastructure ( <i>what</i> ) as there is deficit of 600,000 government doctors, and a shortage of two million nurses ( <i>how big</i> ).

Problem Statement	System: Root Causes and Consequences
<p>In India, women have a limited ability to access and hold health systems accountable (<i>what</i>). Globally, India accounts for 18% of deaths and 36% of deaths (<i>how big</i>) are due to communicable, nutritional, maternal, and perinatal diseases (<i>why</i>).</p>	<p>There is poor access to available healthcare among Indian women (<i>what</i>) due to low awareness of preventive health behaviours (<i>why</i>). In general, 35% of deliveries happen at home and only 20% of pregnant women receive postnatal care services (<i>how big</i>).</p>
	<p>Intergenerational malnourishment has aggravated in India (<i>what</i>) due to the lack of solution convergence (<i>why</i>) as today only 18% of pregnant women meet recommendations of dietary diversity (<i>how big</i>).</p>
	<p>Women and girls in India lack agency to seek care and resources (<i>what</i>) due to social norms and are less prioritised than men and boys in terms of education, nutrition and health care (<i>why</i>). Only 55.4% of women are literate (<i>how big</i>).</p>



### Exercise 1: Problem Tree



This Problem Tree exercise will help you articulate the big problem you wish to tackle, analyse the systems in which it is embedded, and comprehend its consequences to society. In so doing, as an outcome of this exercise, you will construct a succinct problem statement.

To gain a deeper understanding of the process and rationale behind the Problem Tree exercise, and to explore examples of the same, refer to the additional resources.



We encourage you to validate your problem statement with internal and external stakeholders.



### Reflections

- In what ways does your identified societal problem hamper social development? Why is that significant?
- Is the scale of the problem large enough to warrant a platform approach? If not, what other approaches may be better suited to shifting the system in which your problem is embedded?



### Additional Resources

- [Understanding the Problem & Systems Behind it: Problem Tree](#)

## B. CONDUCT SYSTEMS ANALYSIS

This section introduces you to systems thinking and analysis, a framework that will help you gain deep insight into the nature of the system/s that hold your identified problem in place. In gaining insight about the internal workings of your problem system/s, you will be able to identify where in the system the gaps lie, as well as the opportunities that your platform can leverage to bridge these gaps and reorient the system.



### Concept of Systems Thinking and Analysis

Systems thinking is a framework that helps us see how complex societal problems are embedded in their multidimensional context, thereby enabling you to design for sustainable change. One approach to systems thinking is the [5R Framework developed by USAID](#). According to the framework, five forces make up any system: roles, relationships, rules, resources and results. Viewing a system through these 5 lenses and how they intersect, and interconnect with one another is pertinent, for it allows you to identify and articulate deep insights into the underlying patterns and structures that hold the problem in place, and those that can be leveraged to orchestrate systemic impact.

**Case Study**

To understand how the 5R framework can be applied in practice, let us consider the example of **Healing Fields Foundation's** (henceforth HFF) analysis of their problem system—the healthcare system.

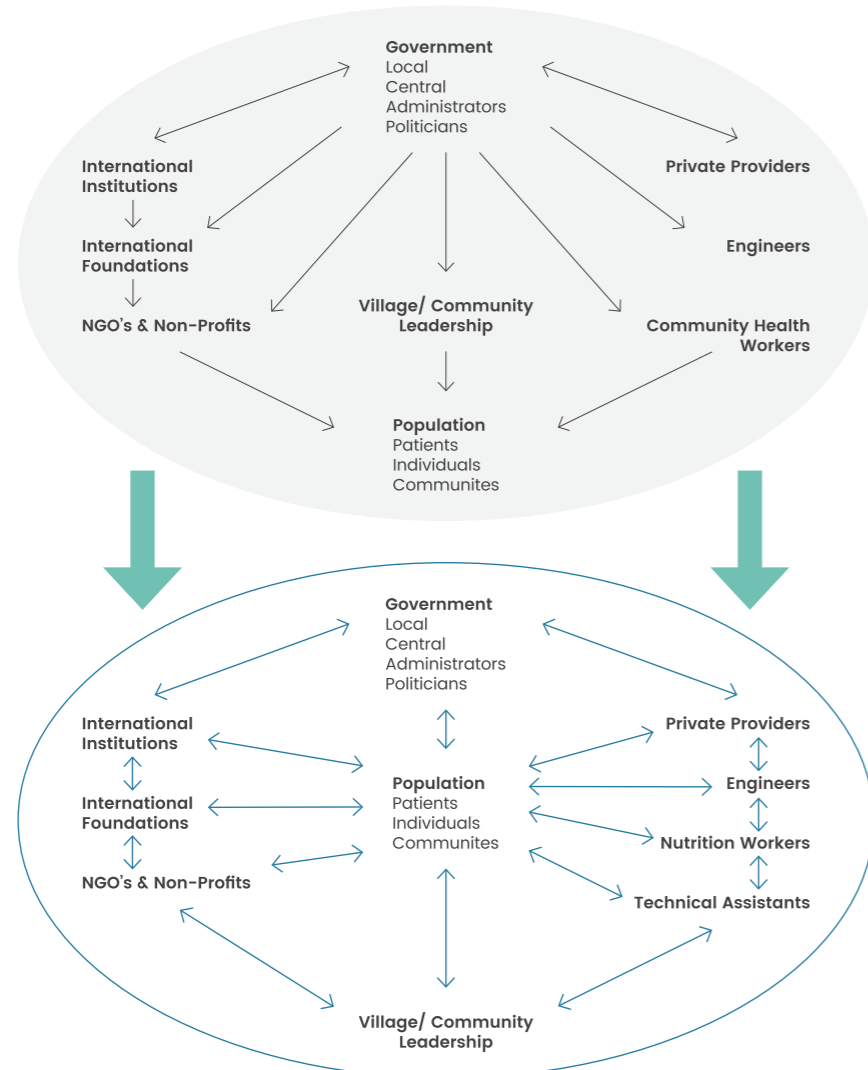


Figure 3: Systems Thinking and Analysis

In the figure, the circle right on top depicts HFF's understanding of the 5Rs that make up the current state of the healthcare system and how they relate to one another. The circle below it, on the other hand, depicts the ideal version of the healthcare system as per HFF's vision, in other words, the target state of the system. Furthermore, HFF hopes to achieve this ideal system for its key actors i.e its target population, which it therefore places at the centre of the system and maps their desired relations with the 5Rs. By juxtaposing these two circles, the HFF team were able to cull out the elements that needed to shift—actors, policies and resources—in the current system, to achieve their desired change.



**Exercise 2: Systems Analysis**



This Systems Analysis exercise will enable you to visualise the current state of your chosen system vis-a-vis how you desire it to be, i.e. its target state. By juxtaposing the two, you will be able to analyse the inner workings of the current system and envision how it can be reoriented, in order to realise the target state.



*Brainstorm your systems map with other stakeholders in the system—team members, communities, partners and officials and accordingly iterate, iterate, iterate your systems map!*



**Reflections**

- What are the places in the current system where you can intervene and co-create with other actors, in order to shift the system to its target state?
- In what ways will the target state of the system solve the problems in your identified system? Does the target state of the system hold the promise of affecting change at scale? If not, iterate your systems map to arrive at a target state of the system such that it holds the potential to generate large scale and sustainable change.
- Refer to the Core Design Principles of Platforms for the good of all, as detailed in the introduction, to reflect on how frictions and blockages in the current state of the system can be overcome.



**Additional Resources**

- [Ashoka's Online System Change Course](#)
- [Systems Thinking: In the Context of Societal Platforms](#)
- [Readings: System Change](#)

## C. CRAFT A COMPELLING MISSION STATEMENT

In the previous sections, you identified the problem you wish to tackle, as well as the nature of the system it is embedded in. This section will enable you to streamline your efforts towards shifting the system to its desired state by clearly defining this desired state and the impact you are working towards. This, in turn, will translate to your long term objective or mission statement that you and your team will pursue to ultimately affect societal change.



### Concept: Mission Statement

A compelling mission statement is a powerful way to define your organisation's purpose and give direction to your team's efforts. Mission statements clearly articulate *what* you do, *how* you do it and *why* you do it, such that it enables the reader to instantly understand what will shape your organisation's values and strategy in the coming years.

Clarity in the content of a mission statement is typically achieved by making the statements *specific* and *measurable*. One way to ensure that your mission statement is measurable and specific is to account for the following:

- The **societal outcomes** you wish to realise or more specifically the **value** your platform will orchestrate for actors (**What** or **Vision**)
- The **approach** you will adopt to realise your vision (**How**)
- **Key actors** with whom you wish to orchestrate change for (**For Whom**)
- The **scale of impact** you wish to orchestrate (**Magnitude**)
- **Geography** of intended impact (**Where**)
- **Timeline** for achieving your mission (**By When**)

Clarity in the form of a mission statement is typically achieved by keeping the mission statement *concise, jargon-free* and in the *present tense*.

### Case Study

To better understand the components of a good mission statement, let us consider and take apart an example of a mission statement. This mission statement was formulated by [EkStep Foundation](#), which seeks to improve literacy and numeracy for children.

"Improve literacy and numeracy (**What**) by increasing access to learning (**How**) for 200 million (**Magnitude**) children (**For Whom**) in India (**Where**) by 2020 (**By When**)"



### Exercise 3: Craft a Compelling Mission Statement



This exercise details a seven-step process to help you craft a compelling mission statement for you and your team.



*Huddle with your organisation's internal leadership and external mentors to validate your mission statement. You can use the following questions as reflection points during these huddle sessions.*



### Reflections

- If you were to achieve your mission statement, in what ways would it shift the system and orchestrate impact at population scale?
- How does your mission statement "unlock the agency" (core design principle) of your actors in the system?



### Additional Resources

- [Creating Mission and Vision Statements](#)

## OUTCOMES CHECK-IN

Before we move to the second module, here is a checklist to help you ensure you have covered all necessary ground:

- ✓ Have you identified a problem that has the potential to be solved at scale?
- ✓ Have you identified the key actors for whom you would want to orchestrate societal change?
- ✓ Have you been able to gain a nuanced understanding of the current state of the system that contains and sustains the problem you have identified?
- ✓ In the current state of the system, have you been able to identify sites of intervention that will facilitate large scale change?
- ✓ Are the assumptions that inform the claims made in your problem and mission statements supported by sufficient data?
- ✓ Have your problem and mission statements been validated by internal and external stakeholders?

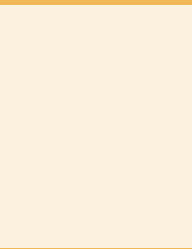
## CONCLUSION

In this module, you have gained an understanding of the problem you wish to positively affect, its root causes (Problem Statement) and the system in which it is embedded (Systems Analysis), so as to articulate the societal outcomes (Mission Statement) you and your team will hereby pace towards. In the next module, you will dive deeper still into the system you wish to shift, to identify the opportunities you can leverage to achieve your mission. As you continue through this fieldbook, we recommend that you keep returning to this module: one, to never lose sight of your problem and mission statement, and two, in case new developments warrant that they be changed.



2

**Identifying  
Opportunities**



## INTRODUCTION

While there are several ways to achieve the mission you have set out for yourself, this fieldbook narrows down only on one method that can help you achieve your mission—a platform. In this module, you will take the first step towards designing the platform. In doing so, you will also be able assess whether the platform approach is indeed best suited to resolving your problem statement and realising your mission statement.

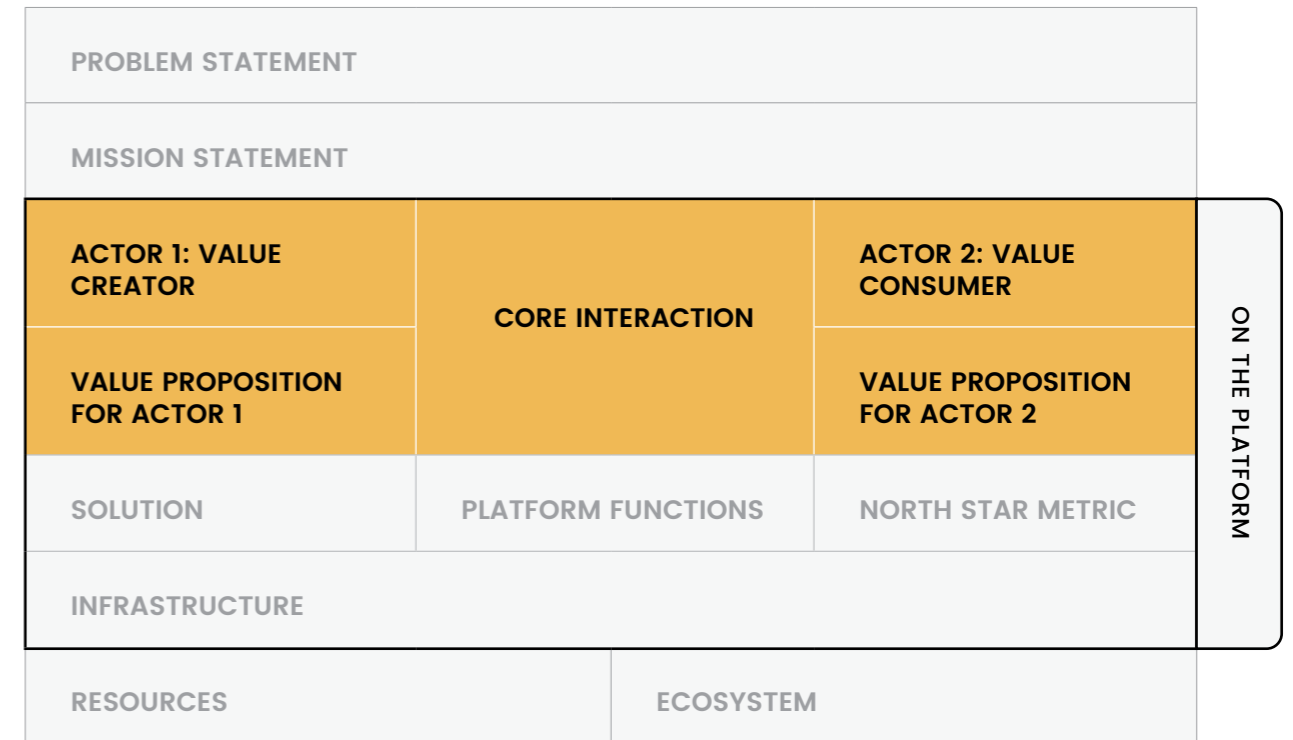
To begin designing your platform, it is important that we briefly revisit the fundamentals of platforms—what exactly does a platform do and how does it work? As we have seen in the introduction, a platform connects a large network of actors, who play different roles and interact in a variety of ways to create and exchange value. All platforms, however, are designed to support one interaction at a time i.e the core interaction. The design of a platform thus starts with the core interaction that it enables between actors, which is the most important activity that will take place on any platform—the exchange of value that attracts actors to the platform in the first place. Over time, the platform layers new forms of interactions on top of the core interaction to help users create new forms of value, but the fact remains that all platforms are first designed around a single core interaction. The fundamental purpose of a platform—for-impact then is to design a core interaction between key actors in society in such a way, that it inspires exponential societal change.

In this module, you will:

- A. Map and analyze your mission network**
- B. Identify the core interaction of your platform, and**
- C. Seek community validation of your assumptions and thinking thus far**

Since a network of actors is essential to any platform, through network mapping and analysis, you will map out the interactions between actors as they currently exist (and as you desire them to exist) in your problem space. On the basis of your network map, you will identify the key actors and the core interaction that your platform will orchestrate between them, such that it affects large-scale impact. Lastly, you will validate and align your core interaction, problem statement, and mission statement with the context of actors and stakeholders important to your platform. Additionally, you will evaluate whether the platform approach is indeed the best approach to realising your mission statement.

As an outcome of this module, you will complete the highlighted boxes in the canvas below. This will include identifying the core interaction which lies at the heart of your platform, as well as validating it against the two actors—one who creates value and the other who consumes it—between whom your platform will facilitate value exchange. Henceforth, these two actors will be referred to as value creators and value consumers, correspondingly.



## A. MAP AND ANALYZE YOUR MISSION NETWORK

The objective of this section is for you to graphically represent all the actors involved in the system you wish to orchestrate changes within, and the interactions between these actors. In doing so, you will generate insights on the nature of your mission ecosystem, and additionally be able to gauge the key actors and key interactions—the core interaction—you would want to design your platform around.



### Concept of Network Mapping and Analysis

Network mapping and analysis is a process of mapping and investigating social structures through graphic representation. Network maps allow you to analyse the kinds of actors involved in a given network and understand how they are linked, their influence on the ecosystem, and their goals. This, in turn, will allow you to clarify your own view of your mission’s ecosystem and accordingly, develop a strategic approach to catalysing interactions between different actors such that they influence and affect positive change in the ecosystem.

A network map is composed of two key elements—Actors and Interactions—described in detail below:

**An Actor** is either a person or an entity with a distinct and independent existence. Actors can represent a variety of things: an individual, institution, an organisation, a department, etc. They all interact and relate to other actors and have the potential to influence the ecosystem. For example, if we are mapping an education network or ecosystem, the network map will comprise actors such as representatives from the primary school (children, teachers, headmasters, parents), the Ministry of Education, etc.

**An Interaction** is an action that describes what an actor does with other actors. As with actors, interactions too can refer to a variety of things—a connection between actors, transfer of goods between actors, exchange of information between actors, etc. Extending the previous example, schools may interact with students to provide knowledge, with parents to share feedback on students, and with the Ministry of Education to receive funds, certifications and other resources.

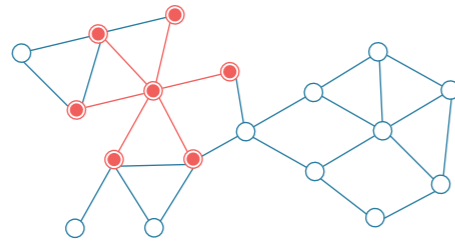


Figure 4: Network Mapping and Analysis leads to the identification of key actors (red dots) and interactions (red lines) which together comprise a network



### Exercise 4: Network Mapping and Analysis



This detailed step-by-step exercise on mapping and analysing your network of actors and their interactions will help you identify the network of actors you would want to co-create with and wish for your platform to catalyse, in order to achieve your mission.

*For the purpose of this exercise, please keep Exercise 2: Systems Analysis and Exercise 3: Mission Statement handy. Network mapping and Analysis is an extension of Exercise 2, and Exercise 3 will anchor your network map, such that you only map actors relevant to your mission statement.*



### Reflections

- How have you defined the boundaries of your network map? Reflect on which actors you included in your map, and who you may have left out, and why?
- Which interactions between actors hold the potential to positively influence your mission ecosystem?
- On the basis of your network map, what are the challenges and blockages that you have identified in your mission ecosystem? How can interactions in the network be redesigned to overcome such challenges?
- How can you orchestrate and open up space for actors to interact in new ways and exchange value?
- What are the ways in which you can validate the barriers and synergies you have identified between selected actors?



### Additional Resources

- [Network Mapping and Analysis: How-to-Guide](#)

## B. IDENTIFY CORE PLATFORM INTERACTIONS

Here, you will identify the core interaction—the single most important activity that will take place on your platform towards the exchange of value between two relevant actors. The core interaction exercise will draw from Exercise 4: Network Mapping and Analysis and Exercise 2: Systems Analysis; so, do keep them handy. On identifying the core interaction for your platform, you will have taken your very first step towards designing your platform-for-impact.



### Concept of Core Interactions

If we were to break down any platform, however large, we would find that all platforms at their very core boil down to a simple set of repeated actions that its users perform. A core interaction is therefore defined as a set of actions that users need to engage with repeatedly, in order to derive value on any platform. If any of the actions that constitute a core interaction break down, the platform will cease to exist.

### Case Study

In the case of Youtube, it is the creation, exchange, and consumption of content by users, which together constitute the platform's core interaction. When repeated at scale, Youtube's core interaction fulfils their mission "to give everyone a voice and show them the world," in other words, to democratising creation of and access to content. Users may indeed be able to perform other actions on Youtube, but if the actions constituting the core interaction—creators creating and uploading videos, and viewers consuming and upvoting or downvoting the videos—breaks down, the platform will fail to continue orchestrating the creation and exchange of value between users.

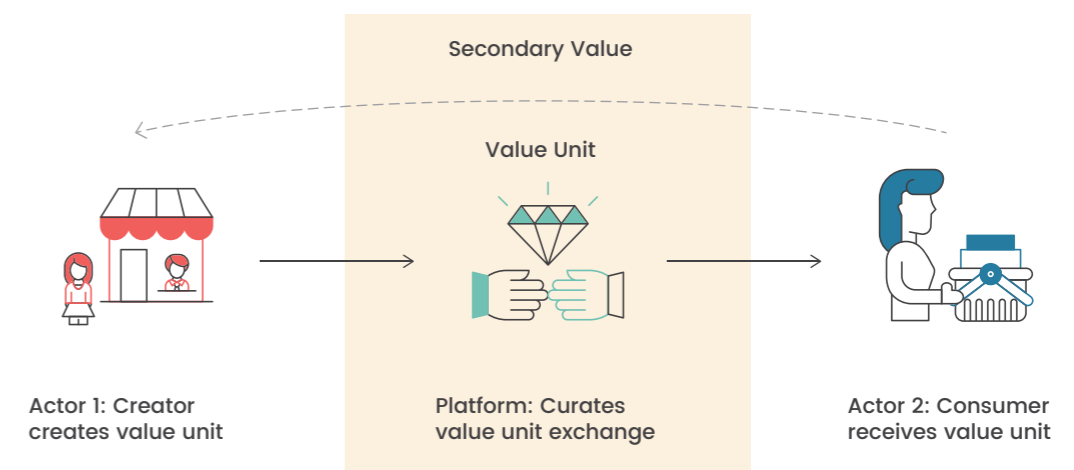


Figure 5: Core Interaction on a Platform

The anatomy of a core interaction is composed of three components:

- Actors:** In any core interaction, there are fundamentally two actors who participate. The first is the value creator who creates value and the second is the value consumer who consumes the created value. While the reasons behind why different actors participate on a platform may vary, the roles of value creator and value consumer remain constant.
- Value unit:** In every core interaction there exists an exchange of information that actors derive value from. Core interactions begin with the creation of value units by value creators. Videos on YouTube, tweets on Twitter, profiles on LinkedIn and a list of available cabs on Uber are all value units. On the basis of the value unit, value consumers can make a decision on whether they would like to go forth with further exchange, or not.
- Curation:** The delivery of a given value unit to relevant value consumers is based on the curation by the platform. Curation refers to the mechanisms used by the platform to enable and manage the exchange of information or value units between users. These mechanisms could range from matchmaking and feedback loops, to exchange of monetary value. In the case of Youtube, the upvotes, downvotes, and reporting of abuse are examples of curation mechanisms.



Figure 6: Anatomy of a Core Interaction

**Case Study**

To better understand the concept of core interactions, let us consider the example of another platform—[DonorsChoose.org](https://www.donorschoose.org), founded by an Ashoka Fellow, Charles Best. It seeks to empower primary school teachers with resources they need by directly connecting them with interested funders. In the case of DonorsChoose, the school teacher is the value creator who uploads project details and resource requirements onto the platform. These project details constitute the value unit. On the basis of this value unit, potential funders (potential value consumers) can decide whether they would like to fund the project or not. If the funder decides to go ahead with the funding i.e once this exchange of information takes place, everything else falls into place: the platform provides for appropriate curation mechanisms such as matching by interest and geography, as well as services such as fund transfer and resources distribution, which completes the core interaction.



**Exercise 5: Identify the Core Interaction**



The exercise supplies you with a detailed template, which will aid you in identifying potential core interaction/s that your platform can orchestrate.

As an outcome of Exercise 5, you will replicate your core interaction and its constituent elements in the form of the visualisation below.

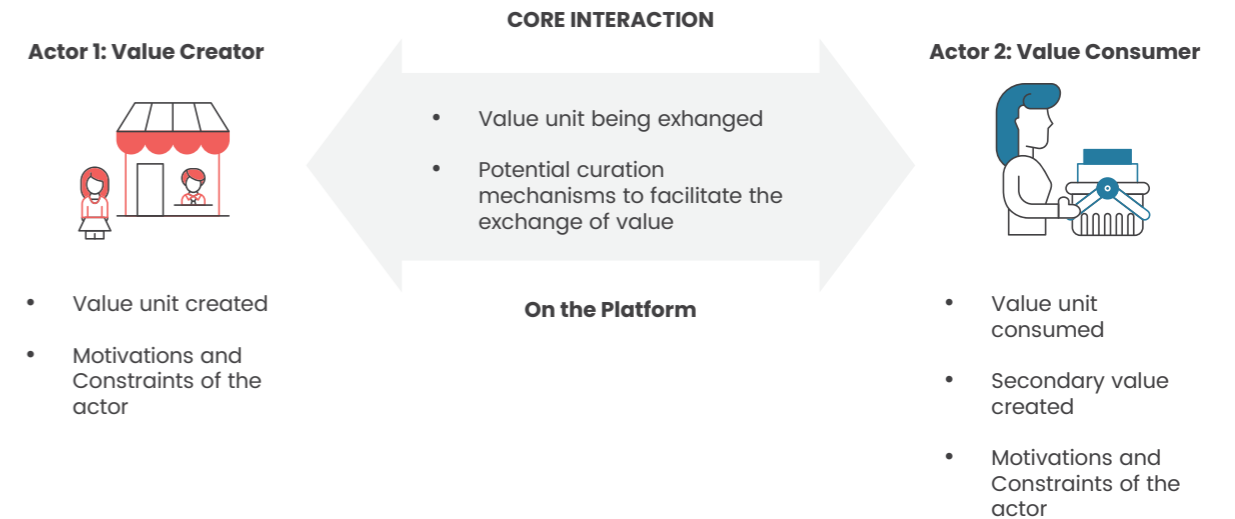


Figure 7: Typical Flow of the Core Interaction

Additionally you will validate whether your core interaction attends to the ten design principles detailed below. Refer to [Value Interaction Principles in the additional resources](#) to gain a deeper understanding of these principles.

**10 Design Principles of a Core Interaction**

- Solves for micro-routines
- Repeatable value exchange
- Shows the value gained
- Focuses on the most significant problem
- Nurtures a digital twin
- Leverages indirect value
- Is minimalistic
- Appreciates latent value
- Shares platform value
- Generates consistent value

Figure 8: Design Principles for Core Interactions



For the purpose of this exercise, please keep Exercise 2: Systems Analysis (Module 1) and Exercise 4: Network Mapping and Analysis (Module 2) handy.





## Reflections

- Visualise the potential your core interaction holds to generate population scale impact?
- Visualise how the growth of your platform and the addition of new users will increase the value generated for every other user?
- What risks do you foresee in implementing your platform's core interaction in digital form? How can these risks be mitigated?
- Reflect on the implicit and explicit assumptions that informed your choice of core interaction? Do they align with the 9 Core Design Principles of Platforms-for-impact, detailed in the introduction? How can you modify your core interaction to ensure alignment?



## Additional Resources

- [The core interaction: What platforms and marketplaces can learn from super Mario bros.](#)
- [Value Interaction Principles](#)

# C. COMMUNITY VALIDATION OF YOUR ASSUMPTIONS AND THINKING

Before you move on to further elaborate your platform design in the next module, it is crucial at this stage of the platform journey to pause and validate your thinking with key actors and stakeholders in your mission network. This section equips you with a comprehensive framework to conduct primary research with actors who directly or indirectly affect your problem (problem statement), proposed solution (core interaction), and with whom you and your platform will collaborate to realise your mission (mission statement). As an outcome of this section, based on your research findings, you will modify and refine your problem statement, mission statement and core interaction, such that they are in alignment with the lived realities of the actors who are part of your problem system.



## Concept of Community Validation

Despite the fact that a core interaction is designed to support one interaction at a time and typically takes place between two actors, platforms engage a large network of actors who play different roles and interact in a variety of ways. It is expected that three typologies of stakeholders will affect and influence your problem statement and platform-for-impact: Primary, Secondary and Tertiary stakeholders.

- **Primary stakeholders** include your source actor (value creator) and target actor (value consumer) i.e. participants in your core interaction.
- **Secondary stakeholders** are all those actors who are critical to your platform but do not include the source (value creator) and target actor (value receiver). They thus enable the core interaction but are not engaged in the platform.
- **Tertiary stakeholders** are those actors who are not directly intertwined with your platform, but hold the potential to impact the system itself. They indirectly influence the interaction between actors.



## Case Study

Returning to the example of DonorsChoose.org, the primary, secondary and tertiary stakeholders of the platform would be:

1. **Primary Stakeholders:** Donors (value creator) and Teachers (value consumer).
2. **Secondary Stakeholders:** Children, School, Headmaster, Suppliers, etc.
3. **Tertiary Stakeholders:** Other teachers, Parents, Industry experts and Leaders, Infrastructure Providers.

## Evaluating Stakeholders: The 6A Framework

To ensure that your platform rests on a strong foundation, it is crucial that your problem statement, mission statement and core interaction reflect and align with the complexity of the context of each stakeholder category. The 6A framework enables you to ascertain your platform-stakeholder fit. It allows you to comprehensively assess and analyse your stakeholder's understanding of your identified social problem and their capacity to participate in your proposed core interaction. The 6As are as follows:


<b>AWARENESS</b>	Existing knowledge possessed by stakeholders with regards to your identified problem and existing solutions.
<b>ACCESSIBILITY</b>	Access that stakeholders already have to existing solutions, as well as to the resources they will require to utilise your proposed platform solution.
<b>AFFORDABILITY</b>	Cost associated with the proposed platform and the ability and willingness of stakeholders to bear it. Cost here refers to both the actual and the opportunity cost.
<b>ADOPTION</b>	Ability and willingness of the stakeholders to adopt your proposed platform.
<b>ACCREDITATION</b>	Value placed by stakeholders on the core interaction promised by your platform.
<b>ASPIRATION</b>	Higher order needs or ambitions of the stakeholders. Even though these might not be immediate needs, if the platform is able to fulfil its actors' aspirations, it has a higher chance of gaining stakeholder acceptance.




## Exercise 6: Community Validation



In this exercise, you will employ the 6A framework to both, frame relevant questions to engage with your stakeholders, as well as to analyse their responses. Subsequently you will modify your problem statement, mission statement and core interaction, such that they reflect your learnings from the ground.

 Since this exercise will draw from Exercise 4: Network Mapping and Analysis (Module 2), do keep it handy.

 Since this exercise highly depends on the problem and stakeholder context, feel free to use other mechanisms to validate your problem statement, mission statement and core interaction.



### Reflections

- What are the learnings, drawn from the pilot, that support the current problem hypothesis?
- What are the findings from the pilot that enable you to identify new interactions or improve the existing core interaction?
- How can you ensure that the user is able to perform the interaction within their current context (access, resources, capabilities etc.)?
- What impact can this interaction, if repeated at scale, have on the system? Is this impact aligned with the platform's mission?
- Why do you think a digital platform is a feasible (or not a feasible) solution from a community perspective?



### Additional Resources

- [Field Guide to Human-Centered Design](#)
- [Case study on Community Need Assessment](#)

## OUTCOMES CHECK-IN

Before we move to the third module, here's a checklist to help ensure that you have covered all necessary ground:

- ✓ Have you been able to draw a comprehensive network map of your mission ecosystem?
- ✓ Have you been able to identify critical stakeholders and interactions through the analysis of your network map?
- ✓ Have you been able to identify 1-2 core interactions that satisfy the ten design principles of core interactions?
- ✓ Does the core interaction address the needs of both the source (value creator) and target (value consumers) actor?
- ✓ Have you been able to return to the previous concepts and modify them based on the feedback from stakeholders?



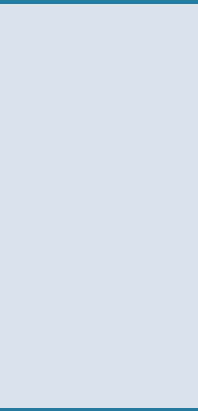
*Remember that not every problem can be, or indeed should be, solved through the platform approach. There are many other ways of creating large-scale systemic impact. It is therefore essential that you honestly reflect on whether the platform approach is indeed best suited to realising your mission? If not, consider other available routes to fulfilling your mission.*

## CONCLUSION

This module has aimed to help you arrive at and validate the 'what' of your platform—the core interaction that will be at the heart of your platform. In the next module you will visualise the 'how' of your core interaction, i.e. the design of your platform's curation mechanics and architectural layout that will facilitate the successful execution of your core interaction.

3

**Visualising  
Platform Mechanics  
& Architecture**



# INTRODUCTION

By identifying the core interaction in the previous module, you have arrived at that one interaction that explains why your platform exists, i.e. the value it promises to its participants. The question that naturally follows is how will you make the core interaction possible at scale? In other words, how will the platform orchestrate value creation and exchange? Platforms do so by providing the infrastructure, within the frame of which relevant actors can create and exchange value in mutually rewarding ways.

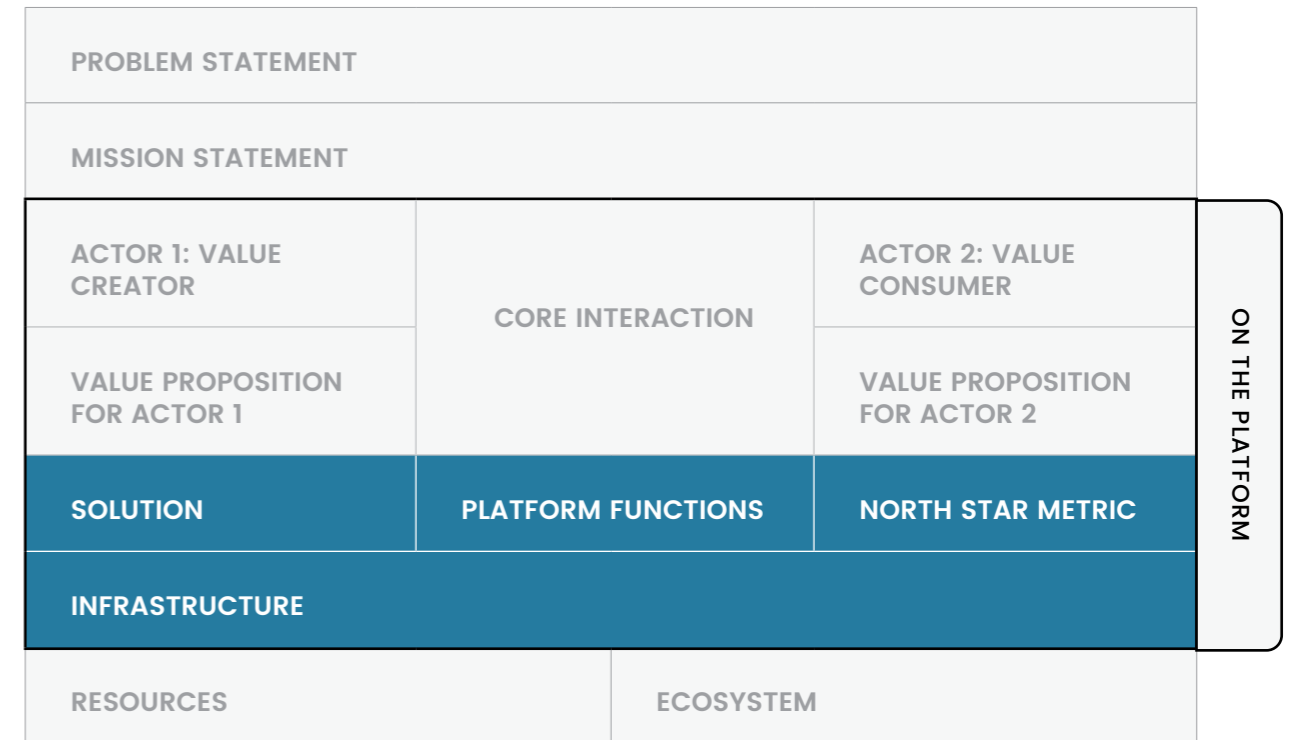
While the platform infrastructure refers to the components that make up the platform itself, its architecture implies how the components are designed and interact with each other. Well-designed platform architecture - functions and curation mechanisms - ensures that the core interaction occurs in significant numbers, which in turn attracts more and more actors to the platform; thereby scaling the platform and its intended societal impact.

In this module, in order to visualise and detail out the design of your platform's architecture you will:

1. Engage in User Journey Mapping: Visualising Platform Solution Design
2. Understand Platform Characteristics and Mechanics
3. Visualise your Platform's Architecture: Blueprint
4. Validate your Platform Blueprint with the Community
5. Define your Platform's North Star Metric

In this module, through User Journey Mapping, you will first visualise how the participants of your core interaction will engage with your platform. Thereafter, you will understand Platform Characteristics and Mechanics - what platforms can and cannot do - which together with your User Journey Map will inform the design of your platform's functionality, architecture and infrastructure (Platform Architecture: Blueprint). Having defined the how of your platform, you will validate your blueprint with your stakeholders. Finally, you will define the north star metric - the key indicator against which, moving forward, you will measure your platform's impact and performance.

As an outcome of this module, you will complete the highlighted boxes in the canvas below.



## A. USER JOURNEY MAPPING: VISUALISING SOLUTION DESIGN

One of the things that will determine the *how* of your platform i.e the design of your platform's functions will be the characteristics and contexts of the actors participating in its core interaction - the actors generating and exchanging value on your platform. This section equips you with a user journey mapping exercise, whereby you will visualise the context of your platform users, and therefore how they will interact with your platform. In other words, as an outcome of this section, you will define the broad process flow or solution design of how your platform will engage with, and orchestrate value for its actors.



### Concept of Network Mapping and Analysis

A user journey map is a visual representation of a user's experience as they interact with a given solution--in this case your platform. Visualising your user's context and thereby actions will allow you and your team to visualise the user's entire experience as a path or journey that begins with having a need, and ends with having that need met.

While user journey maps come in many shapes and formats, they are typically represented as a timeline of all the touch points between a user and a specific solution. At each of these touchpoints, user journey maps push you to imagine the motivation, pain points, and actions of your specific users. A user journey map is a useful tool for you and your team to reflect upon your platform from the user's point of view. Thus, you can design functions that enable mutually enriching interactions that align with the context and meet the needs of your users.

**Case Study**

To better understand the characteristics of a user journey map, let us consider an illustration of a user interacting with a typical food delivery platform:

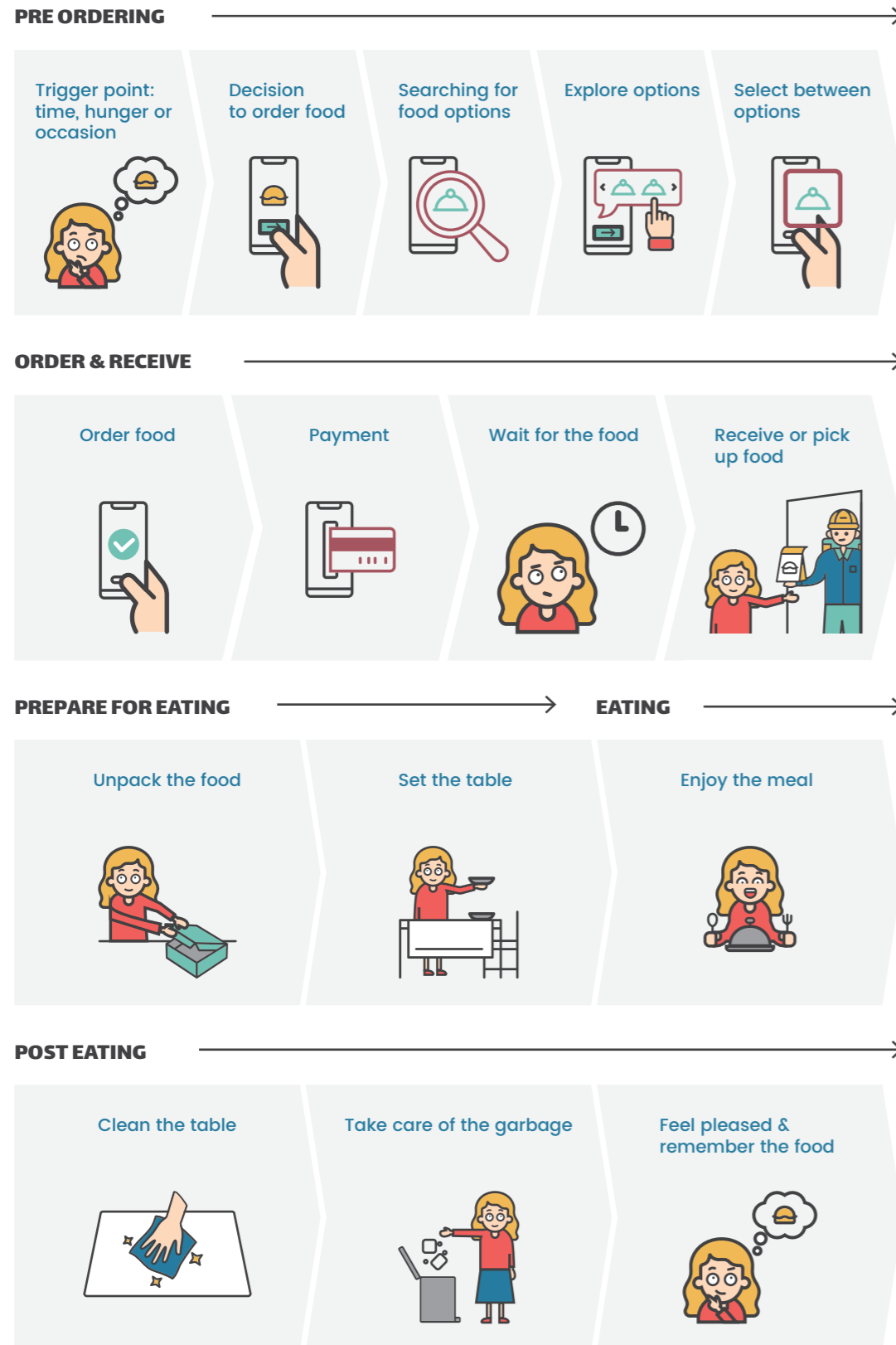


Figure 9: User Journey Map of a Food Delivery Platform

**Characteristics of user journey maps as evident from the illustration above:**

- User persona or archetype:** While not reflected in the illustration above, users of any solution are generally typified into an user persona—a semi-fictional character—based on their characteristics. Characteristics such as the demography, technical context, and behavioural particularities which inform the user persona helps you think through the users’ interactions on your platform from the perspective of an actual user.
- Broad process flow:** A user journey map details out the user’s experiences and context, as they interact with the platform across three broad stages:
  - before they come on to the platform
  - while interacting with the platform
  - post their interaction with the platform.
 In doing so, you and your team will be able to visualise the needs of the user, how your platform will meet these needs, and the subsequent effects of the same.
- Touch Point details:** Each of the three stages of your broad process flow is further broken down by detailing all the touchpoints between the user and the platform, with specific focus on the anticipated motivations, pain points and feelings of the user at that particular moment in time.
- User journey maps account for both physical and digital interactions:** A platform’s core interaction can pan out as both physical and digital interactions. As illustrated above, once an order is placed, the restaurant cooks the food in the stipulated time, the food delivery agent picks it up from the restaurant and travels to the user’s location to deliver it. This means that, while the activity of ordering food takes place in the digital sphere, all other activities that result in the consumer deriving value are physical in nature. Hence, your user journey should account for all these background activities in the physical world as well, even when the user is not directly engaging with them.



**Exercise 7: User Journey Mapping**



This exercise will help you visualise the user journeys of both the participants of your core interaction - the source actor (value creator) and the target actor (value consumer). For further readings on User Journey Mapping refer to the Additional Resources at the end of this section.

As an outcome of this exercise you will replicate your two user personas (value consumer and creator) and their interaction in the form of the visualisation below.



*We encourage you to validate your User Journey Maps with internal and external stakeholders.*

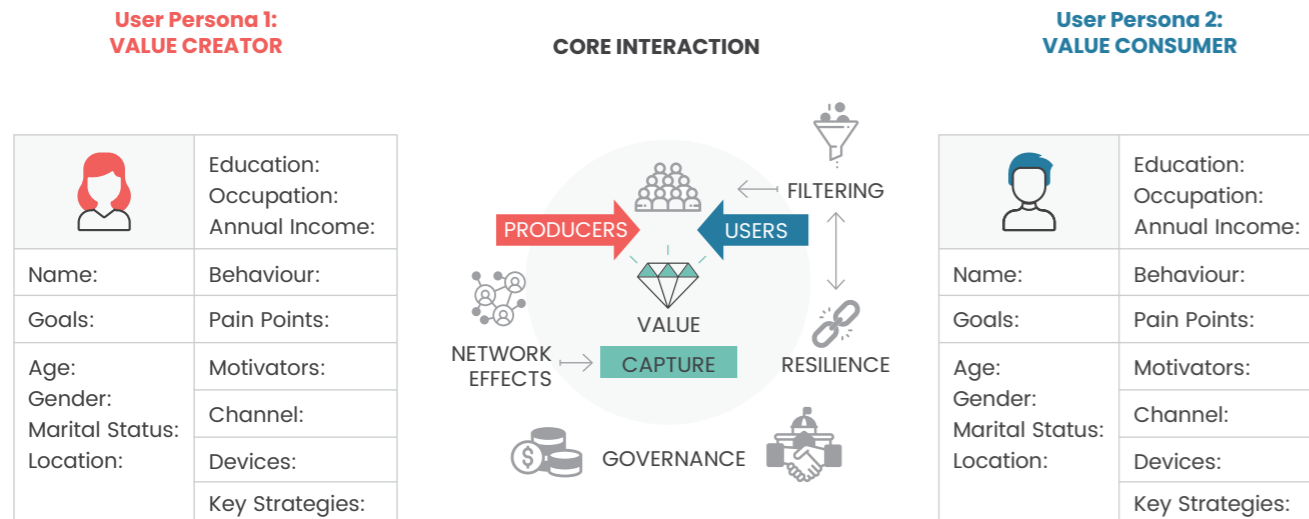


Figure 10: Core Interaction with Detailed Persona View

## B. PLATFORM CHARACTERISTICS AND MECHANICS

In order to arrive at the *how* of your platform – the design of your platform’s functions or curation mechanisms, it is important that you understand the properties and peculiar characteristics of the medium you are working with, namely digital platforms. This section equips you with concepts to gain a deep understanding of what digital platforms can or cannot do – their potentials and limitations – which in turn will enable you to design platform functions that ensure that valuable core interactions begin to occur in significant numbers.



### Concept of Platform Characteristics and Mechanics

Successful core interactions, as you recall, hold the potential to generate large scale impact when performed repeatedly. In platform jargon, this results in positive network effects (defined below). To make core interactions easy for actors and thereby ensure their successful repetition, platforms must perform three key functions: pull, facilitate and match. All three are essential and each has its special challenges. This section defines and uses these three functions to frame the properties that are integral to digital platforms, and which you will have to contend with as you visualise the design of the specific functions you would want your platform to perform.

Key Platform Characteristics	Function or Curation Mechanism	Definition
Chicken-or-Egg Problem	Pull	How to begin building a user base for a two-sided platform when each user base, on each side of the platform depends on the prior existence of the other
Retaining Users	Pull	How to encourage users to keep returning to the platform
Design Tensions	Pull	How to prioritise design differences or polarities such as supply and demand for the benefit of the platform.
Platform Velocity	Facilitate	Frequency at which actors need to come onto a platform to exchange value
Platform Governance	Facilitate	The rules, practices and design decisions put in place to influence users and the ecosystem
Matching Intention	Match	Value units exchanged between actors
Network Effects	Effect	Value creation/generation whereby every new user makes the platform service or experience more valuable to every other user



### Reflections

- What are the 2-3 broad categories of user personas that the platform will target?
- How can you leverage the key motivators and resolve the pain points of your users through your platform design?
- What use cases have you envisioned for your platform?
- What assumptions have you made while mapping the user journey? How can you validate your assumptions?
- What are the risks you identified in your User Journey Map? How can you mitigate these risks?
- How can your platform design provide space for co-creation with your key actors? How can this process of co-creation be sustained at scale?



### Additional Resources

- [A beginner’s guide to user journey mapping](#)
- [User Journey Mapping – A powerful tool](#)
- [Case study of designing digital health services at scale- PATH](#)

## NETWORK EFFECTS

Network effects refers to the impact that the number of users of a platform has on the value created for every other user i.e. every new user makes the platform more valuable to every other user. Positive network effects refer to the ability of a well-managed and well-designed platform community to produce significant value for each user of the platform. In the past few decades, positive network effects have been the main source of value creation within platforms. Key to invigorating a positive network effect is quality curation, such that the match between a producer and consumer is a happy one i.e. the successful repetition of the core interaction.

## PULL FUNCTION

Every platform needs to pull value creators and value consumers onto the platform so as to enable the core interaction between them. When seeking to pull these actors onto your platform, you will have to contend with the following tensions:

**Chicken-or-egg Problem:** If on platforms, it is a network of actors that produces the bulk of value for other users, the question that follows is, how do you get the first users to join your platform? Such two-sided platforms tend to run into a problem called the chicken-or-egg problem. Simply stated, each category of actor depends on the prior existence of the other side:

If actor A is not on the platform, actor B will not play;  
If actor B is not on the platform, actor A will not play.

The chicken-or-egg problem states that on any platform that has two types of users - value creators and value consumers - one type of user needs to be in place before the other one has an incentive to join.

Most platforms fail to launch simply because they are unable to overcome the chicken-or-egg problem.

You can better understand the chicken-or-egg problem and various strategies to overcome it, i.e. strategies to bring both players onto the platform simultaneously, by referring to the readings shared in the Additional Resources section.

**Retaining Users:** A second pull challenge is the retention of users' interest once they visited your platform. One powerful way to do so is through feedback loops. A feedback loop on a platform can take various forms, but essentially creates a constant flow of self-reinforcing actions that encourages users to keep returning to the platform. Effective feedback loops help increase value creation, thereby attracting and building an audience, and finally contributing to enhancing network effects.

**Design Tensions-Polarities:** Much like the chicken-or-egg problem, as an entrepreneur of a platform, you will encounter other tensions when seeking to pull actors onto your platform. There are three kinds of tensions that emerge on platforms:

- **Supply vs Demand:** With increased supply, discoverability and relevance usually decreases. But with less supply, the perception of limited value is created (this is called the Ghost Town Problem).
- **Quality vs Quantity:** As the number of actors increase on the platform, the quality

of interaction and behaviours of the actor on the platform can deteriorate. This requires strong curation/moderation and rules.

- **Scale vs Context:** Context is mostly local but scaling requires a global/broader mindset.

## FACILITATE FUNCTION

The Facilitate function on platforms refers to your platform's ability to provide curation tools and rules to actors, enabling them to connect and make valuable exchanges on your platform. When thinking of facilitating core interactions on your platforms, you will have to think in terms of the properties of platform design listed below:

**Platform Velocity:** Platform velocity is the frequency at which users would need to come together on the platform to exchange value. A higher platform frequency or velocity usually translates into more active users and more engagement on the platform.

Example: On the platform DonorsChoose, teachers visit the platform only when they have an active requirement for fundraising for their classroom. A teacher may revisit the platform regularly till she is able to raise the required fund (low velocity). A funder who cares for the cause deeply may visit the platform regularly so as to fund multiple classrooms as and when required (medium velocity). However, providing additional value to the teachers may encourage interactions such as capability building, lessons/certifications for teachers to enhance their teaching skills, and so on. Such interactions will provide reasons for teachers to visit the platform more regularly (high velocity).

**Platform Governance:** Platform Governance refers to a set of rules, practices and design decisions put in place by platform entrepreneurs, so as to influence who participates on the platform, how interactions occur, how value is distributed, the data ownership and security, and how potential conflicts and abuse are resolved. Core interactions are governed using three sets of tools: laws, norms and architecture.

**Laws:** The laws of a platform are explicit rules that influence user behaviour. Platform laws should be transparent, because explicitly stated rules encourage members to share their best insights with everyone else on the platform. This allows for the laws to improve and evolve for the platform to function better.

**Norms:** In order to develop lasting norms, cultures and expectations that influence user behaviour and interactions, platform creators or orchestrators should invest in nurturing vibrant communities.

**Architecture:** In platform jargon, the term 'architecture' refers to programming code. Well-designed software systems too can encourage and reward good behaviour. You will explore more about architectural design in the next section of this module.

## MATCH FUNCTION

Using data about value creators, value consumers and the value units exchanged, platforms seek to match the right users with one another, so as to ensure that users exchange information and goods that are most relevant to them. Data about core interactions allows platforms to refine their curation mechanisms such that mutually rewarding matches are enabled between value creators and consumers. When

defining the match function of your platform you will have to think through the following characteristics of platforms:

**Matching Intention:** A platform creates value by facilitating a match between two or more interdependent groups. Matching Intention generates the maximum number of value units that a producer can exchange at any given time with a consumer.

Based on a platform's intended purpose, there exist two broad categories of platforms— Maker and Exchange platforms, in each of which the matching intention is unique. For Maker Platforms - which allow users to build on top of the platform (e.g. Youtube) - typically the matching intention or value units exchanged between actors is very large. For Exchange Platforms - which create value by facilitating direct exchanges or transactions between actors (e.g. Uber) - the matching intention or value units exchanged between actors is usually limited.

In conclusion, we close this section by reiterating the importance of thoughtfully designing your platform such that it resolves the special challenges posed by the three key functions: pull, facilitate and match. In doing so, you will clear the way for the successful repetition of your platform's core interaction, so that it produces positive network effects or the scaling of your platform and mission.



### Additional Resources

- [The Network Effects Bible](#)
- [What I learned from 100's of hours of studying platform businesses](#)
- [Power of Network effects](#)
- [7 Strategies solving the chicken and egg Problem as a startup](#)
- [Platform Revolution: How Networked Markets are Transforming the Economy and How to Make Them Work for You.](#)
- [Platform Types: Explained and Defined \(Maker and Exchange platforms\)](#)

## C. PLATFORM ARCHITECTURE AND INFRASTRUCTURE DESIGN

With the core interaction validated, the user's journey outlined, and the key functions of the platform outlined, the next stage is to move towards prototype development. In this section we will understand various approaches to platform development, gaining a bird's eye view of the process of prototype development. This will enable you to seek technological guidance from experts, plan investment avenues and onboard partners to define and develop the platform and its back-end technology.

Before you read further, this section requires your platform to exhibit certain prerequisites for it to be meaningful. These prerequisites are:

- Have a defined and validated core interaction, as explained in Module 2.

- Have a clear definition of intended platform users through the work done in the network mapping and validation exercise.
- Have a defined set of user stories and features for the platform, as discussed in the previous section.



### Concept for Platform Definition and Architecture

#### Platform Definition

In order to move towards platform development, a constructive conversation is necessary with technology partners. This involves defining high level platform requirements that are built on the user stories. A platform requirements document (PRD) defines the features of a particular platform, including its purpose, functionality, and behaviour. A good PRD should outline your vision from a user's point of view. In our case, this means considering both the sides of actors on the platform. It serves as a guide for the organisation and technical teams to prototype, build, launch and market the platform.

#### Approaches To Developing Platform Architecture

One of the first thoughts that come to mind for an entrepreneur is how to build a platform - which is one of the most difficult phases in their platform journey he/she will face. This is because building a new platform involves defining solution architecture, functionalities, overseeing development and ensuring that the platform is stable. This involves technical expertise, capital, rigorous documentation and product management. In some cases it is a necessity to build a platform, while in other cases one can choose from alternative approaches. Below are some additional paths to consider for entrepreneurs.

There are many approaches to plan for platform development

APPROACHES	WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR YOU?
Build	Design, Develop and Deploy a platform from the ground up
Buy	Outrightly buy a relevant platform for solution needs
Extend	Use pre-existing capabilities of an existing platform for the solution
Integrate	Integrate existing products to develop a platform

**In this fieldbook we are focusing henceforth on building a platform. However, before proceeding further, we encourage you to evaluate carefully if any of the other options might be feasible in your case.**

#### Platform Architecture

The architecture that you build for your platform serves as a map of the system to ensure that all requirements and capabilities have been identified and articulated. While you may not build all the pieces in one go, it will continue to serve as a planning document for platform development. This should be used as a reference guide as you collaborate with your internal product team or an external technology vendor to define and develop the platform.



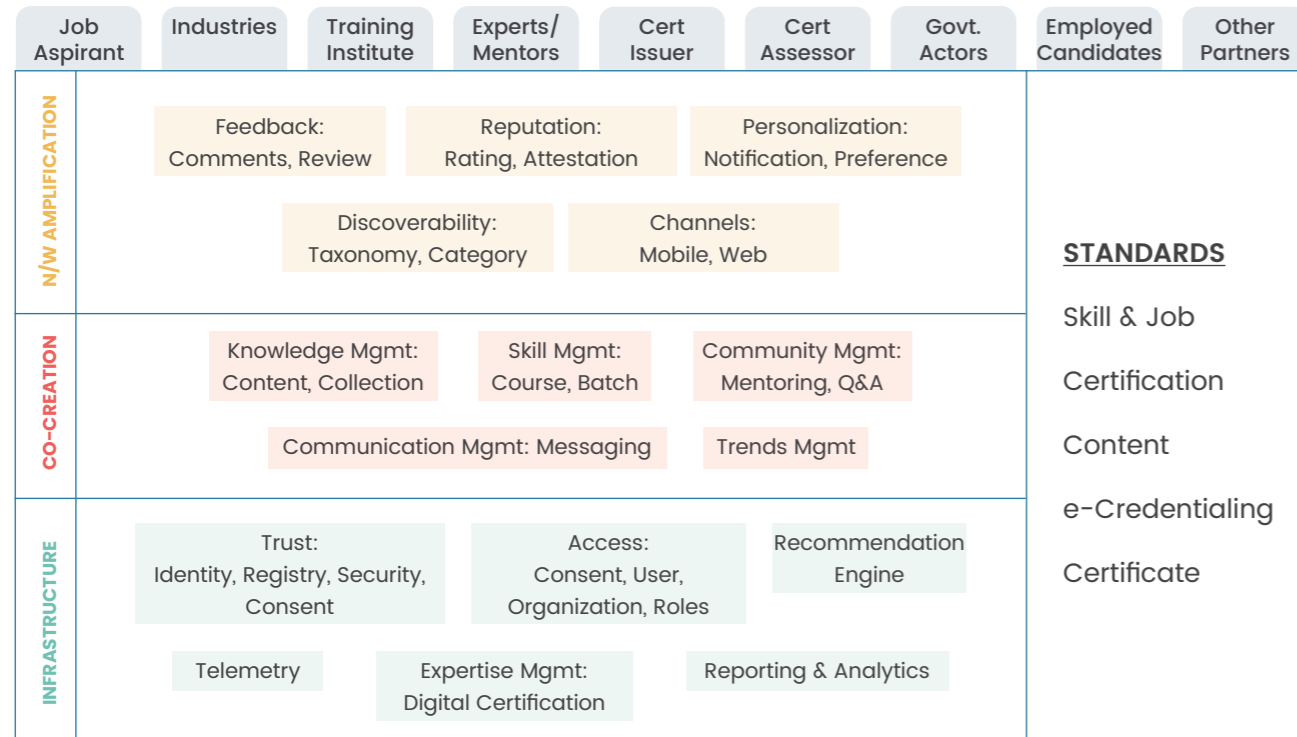


Figure 11: Illustrative Diagram of a Skilling Platform Architecture

The infrastructure is built from foundational layers and standards, such as analytics and user management. This is integrated with services or functionalities on top of it, which are amplified or scaled through interaction layers for the actors on the platform.

**Platform Function**

The value is created by content that comes from these users. Content can be something that is built on the platform (in the case of 'Maker' platforms) or something that is exchanged/traded on the platform (through 'Exchange' platforms). Platforms create value by orchestrating the creation and consumption of this content and facilitating the engagement between such actors (as demonstrated below).

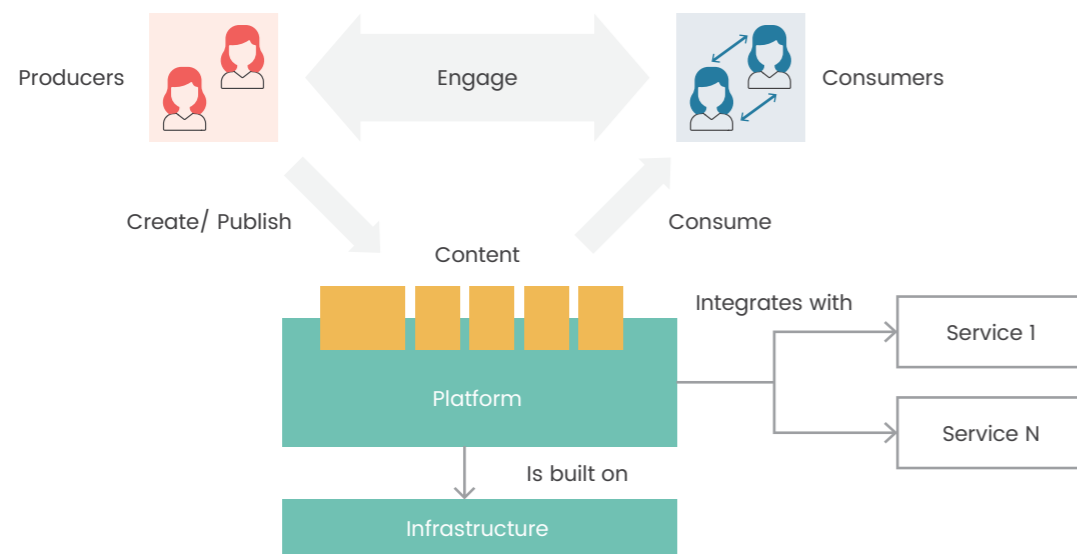


Figure 12: An Abstract Functional Representation of a Platform

**Platform Development**

Platform development is the stage when the first line of code is written. For an entrepreneur, this is the stage when platform ideas are finally manifested in the digital sphere. This is highly recommended to be anchored with a person who demonstrates strong product management skills within the organisation. Typically, organisations hire technology vendors or freelance product managers and developers to guide them and develop the platform with supervision. While these are stages we need to keep in mind, agility in development and testing the product with the user is key to early success of the platform.

Following are the key stages for platform development:

STAGES	DESCRIPTION
Onboarding a technology vendor	Typically, organisations partner with technology partners to develop the platform. These organisations bring the expertise of designing, building and maintaining technology solutions.
Defining functional requirements	Defining platform functional requirements from broad platform business requirements enables technology partners to start designing the UX and UI screen.
Developments of user experience (UX) screens	UX screens depict end user interaction with the platform. These screens capture the existence of all buttons, functionality and flow for all parts of platforms.
Development of user interface (UI) screens	UI screens focus on the look and feel of the platform.
Coding and development	In this phase actual code writing and development happens on the basis of the UX and UI screens.
User testing and bug fixing	In this phase the owner of the platform and the technology team test all aspects of the platform to review what is working well and what is not. The feedback goes to the development team to strengthen the weak segments of the platform.
Platform release and community launch	This is the final stage, when the platform is ready to be released for real-time use with intended actors of the platform.

Please note, staying true to agility and driving conversation with actors through mockups is critical before product development takes place. Mockups in the form of UX and UI screens bring life and a sense of tangibility to the platform.

While the above are key stages, they need not occur only after the entire product is defined and written in a document. The focus should be—prototype, prototype and prototype!



### Exercise 8: Defining Platform Requirements



The goal of this exercise is to define the requirements of a prototype solution.



#### Reflections

- How will the platform make scarce resources widely available?
- What are the micro services on the platform that will enable core interaction?
- How would every interaction be translated into measurable units, which can drive rapid evolution of the platform?
- What are the critical data points that the platform should capture to orchestrate interaction?
- How could the platform identify services that the actors can leverage?
- How might the mission identify and use existing software or services that already exist in the ecosystem?
- How do you ensure that prototype functionalities are testing the core interaction for the pilot? How can you limit yourselves to essential functionalities in the prototype?



#### Additional Resources

- [Societal Platform Technology Architecture Principles](#)
- [Product requirements documents, downsized](#)

## D. COMMUNITY VALIDATION OF PLATFORM BLUEPRINT: DO-THINK-DO



#### Objective

In this section you will validate the blueprint of your platform solution design, or how your platform will deliver value with your stakeholders. This section equips you with the Design-Plan-Implement-Reflect framework to guide you through the process of piloting and validating your platform blueprint with your stakeholders, and incorporating their feedback into your platform solution design such that it is ready for development.



#### Concept of solution design pilot

Unlike the community validation exercise in Module 2 where you assessed the needs of your target stakeholders and validated the potential of your core interaction to fulfil their needs, in the community validation exercise in this section, you will wear your implementation hat and actually test or pilot the how of your core interaction with your target stakeholders.

To pilot your solution design—process flows, features, and templates—with your stakeholders, you will follow the **Design-Plan-Implement-Reflect framework** as detailed below:

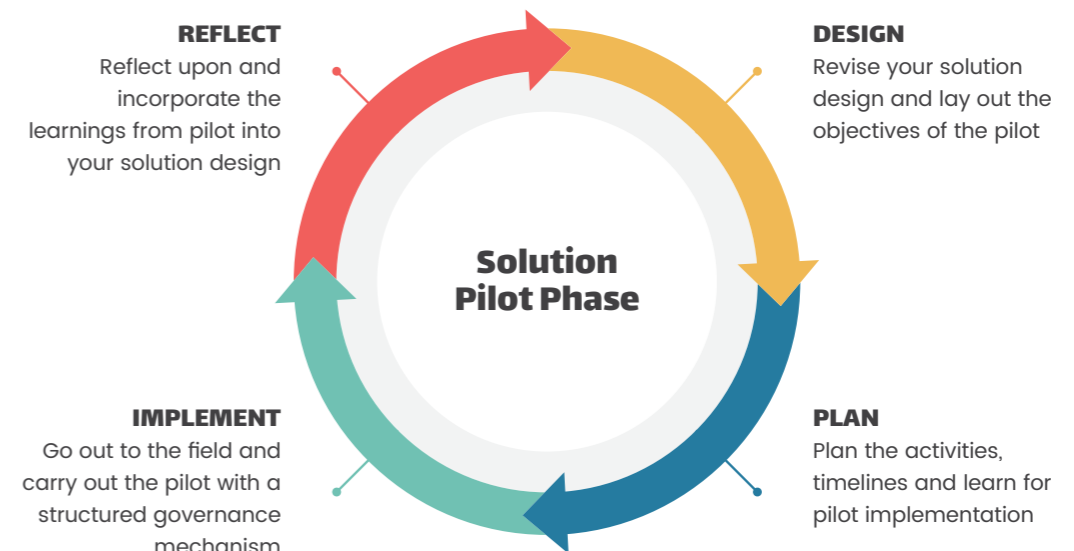


Figure 13: Framework for Solution Design Pilot Phase

**Design:** The Design phase typically entails activities related to designing and modifying your platform blueprint. While you have already developed a detailed solution design by way of the previous three sections, we encourage you to employ the first iteration of the design phase to develop a tangible prototype of your solution design that you can

test with your users. With further iterations of this loop, you will employ this design phase to incorporate the feedback of your users to further refine your platform solution design before testing it with them again.

**Plan:** The Plan phase entails activities whereby you clearly lay down the objectives of your pilot, detailed pilot activities and work plan. The articulation of such a plan will help you remain focused and produce time-bound results.

**Implement:** The Implementation phase is where you deploy and test your platform solution blueprint or prototype with your target stakeholders. This phase and the activities it will entail will be highly contingent on the context of your problem and solution.

**Reflect:** The last phase of the pilot entails reflecting upon your stakeholders' feedback and on your learnings from the pilot implementation phase.

The **Design-Plan-Implement-Reflect framework** is iterative and therefore requires you to engage in the four stages repeatedly, till you believe that you have arrived at the penultimate version of your platform solution design that suits all stakeholders and fulfils your mission.



### Exercise 9: Community Validation [Design-Plan-Implement-Reflect]



Employ the exercise to test your platform solution design with your stakeholders and accordingly modify your solution design. Given that each solution design will be contingent on your specific mission, solution design and stakeholders, feel free to tweak the exercise to the particularities of your context.



*We recommend that you spend at least 6 months on the field testing and revising your solution with your stakeholders. However, feel free to spend as much time as you think is required for you to reach the final solution design.*



### Reflections

- How can you refine your User Journey Map and platform process flows based on your learnings from the pilot?
- How can you refine your PRD based on your learnings from the ground?

#### Solution design:

- What are the key building blocks of the solution?
- What are the key data requirements to build a strong data infrastructure?
- What are the observations as both actors interact through the core interaction? Is the intended impact realised?
- What are the current challenges in deploying the core interaction on the field?

- Who are the other actors involved in enabling the solution?
- How can you ensure that the other actors have enough avenues to co-create on the platform?

#### Platform characteristics:

- Based on your learnings from the pilot, how can you solve the chicken-or-egg problem for your platform?
- What is the frequency of user interaction with the platform? How can you ensure that the actors are comfortable with the frequency of interaction?
- How can you develop a need-based matching intention and filtering process on your platform?
- What are the rules and standards the team is setting to templatised interaction and value exchange between users?

#### Network effects and scale:

- How can you ensure an increase in solution value for every user as the number of users of the platform increase?

#### Problem and mission statement:

- What is the confidence level of your stakeholders in the current articulation of the problem statement? Does it require iteration based on the learnings from the ground?
- How can you ensure that your solution design fulfils the 9 Design Principles of Platform-for-impact laid down in the Introduction module?

## E. DEFINING THE PLATFORM'S NORTH STAR METRIC

In this section, you will articulate the value that your platform is orchestrating for its users in the form of a singular metric, the north star metric. This north star metric, which is a performance indicator, will serve as a way for you and your team to measure the societal impact generated by your platform.



### Concept of North Star Metric

The north star metric is the single metric that best captures the core value that your platform delivers to your users.

Examples of North Star metrics:

- Airbnb: Number of nights booked in accommodation
- Spotify: Amount of time spent listening
- Facebook: Number of active users
- Amazon: Number of transactions per user
- Uber: Number of rides taken per week

It is a way by which you and your team can track and measure your organisation's value addition to your users' journeys. It is the most important metric for guiding innovation, and is therefore the one metric that you and your team can coalesce around to ensure cohesive planning, striving towards it in order to drive sustainable growth across your users.



### Exercise 10: Defining your Platform's North Star Metric



The exercise equips you with the Jobs-to-be-done Framework to arrive at your platform's North Star Metric.



*While the North Star is incredibly valuable to any enterprise to achieve and measure success, don't be discouraged if you cannot set it quickly. It requires profound knowledge of your user and platform, as well as how the two interact. As your platform grows, you will be better equipped to set a better and more valuable North Star Metric.*



### Reflections

- How does your platform help to solve the problem for your users?
- How can you measure that impact in the North Star metric?
- Do you have processes and expertise in place to support your platform's job-to-be-done or north star metric? If not, what processes and expertise would you need in your team to do so?



### Additional Resources

- [Jobs-to-be-done Framework](#)

## OUTCOMES CHECK-IN

As you end this module, we would like you to reflect on your journey through it. You can use the following questions for reflection:

- ✓ What is the minimum viable solution that you can pilot and validate with intended actors of the platform?
- ✓ Have you been able to develop an enabling solution which provides space for co-creation?
- ✓ Does your pilot merit developing a digital twin of your solution?
- ✓ Have you invested in building internal capability or partnerships to manage development of your platform?

We recommend taking some time to articulate your learnings from the community validation exercise and refining the work done so far. This is expected to be an iterative process and would hence be ideal if you could discuss it with a larger set of your stakeholders and peers (your team, employees, mentors, partners, friends etc) to validate and get new perspectives.

## CONCLUSION

In the course of this module, you have taken steps towards visualising your platform solution i.e. manifesting its material and digital structure. In the next module, you will detail out a proposal entailing a strategy towards taking your solution to funders or investors, in the short and long term.

# 4

## **Preparing the Platform for Implementation**

# INTRODUCTION

Having ascertained the user journey, functions of the platform and its north star metric, you are now ready to begin garnering internal and external support for your platform. This last module will enable you to determine organisational requirements for developing the platform and build closer alignment with internal and external factors that will influence your mission. This would include accounting for all stakeholders in the ecosystem where the platform will function. The module will also help you determine the kind of support you will need to eventually launch your platform, and how to develop a proposal to pitch your platform for fundraising.

By the end of this module, you should be able to:

1. Identify the key human and capital resources and capabilities required to develop the platform
2. Contextualise your platform for external alignment
3. Prepare an effective pitch deck for fundraising

This module will enable you to complete the highlighted boxes in the canvas below.

PROBLEM STATEMENT			
MISSION STATEMENT			
ON THE PLATFORM	ACTOR 1: VALUE CREATOR	CORE INTERACTION	ACTOR 2: VALUE CONSUMER
	VALUE PROPOSITION FOR ACTOR 1		VALUE PROPOSITION FOR ACTOR 2
	SOLUTION	PLATFORM FUNCTIONS	NORTH STAR METRIC
	INFRASTRUCTURE		
RESOURCES		ECOSYSTEM	

## A. ACHIEVING INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ALIGNMENT

Now that you have delineated the design of your platform solution, the next step is to assess organisational capabilities that would enable the actual development and launch of the platform. This includes identifying existing internal capabilities, planning to meet current

gaps, and strategising for effective operation of the platform, as well as contextualising your platform within the broader ecosystem, in relation to external factors such as the government, the prevailing policy environment, and civil society. Reflecting on internal capability and external trends, and aligning with these is critical as you move ahead.

The objectives of this section are as follows:

- To identify the internal and external capabilities and resources required as the platform is developed and prepared for use
- To determine how the platform would evolve in response to the original problem it intends to address



### Concept of Internal and External Alignment

To help you think of your platform solution in the context of relevant internal and external forces, broadly speaking, you will need to achieve the following alignment requirements:

1. **Internal alignment:** The development and implementation of a digital platform solution calls for significant expertise, especially as the platform evolves. It is therefore crucial to evaluate if your team might require new people to be onboarded, in order to design, launch and operate the platform efficiently.
2. **External alignment:** A digital platform does not exist independent of its ecosystem. This ecosystem is composed of all factors that exist outside your organisation and can enable or inhibit your platform solution. It includes but is not limited to partnerships, resources, regulations and policies, which you should review and align with thoroughly, as you develop your platform.



### Exercise 11: Achieving Internal and External Alignment



This exercise equips you with a framework that will enable you to align your platform mission with internal and external ecosystems. The framework will supply you with reflective questions that are important for you to consider, in order to cover all the risks and gaps embedded within the organisation's current functions and structure, as well as in the external environment.



### Reflections

- What are the steps you will take to drive broader alignment within the organisation as you pivot towards a platform play?
- What changes should you make in your platform design after assessing the internal capacities and the external environment?
- How do you set up and reorganise yourselves to make the platform mission a success?

## B. EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION FOR FUNDRAISING

With your resource needs identified, you are now in a position to garner the necessary capital for your platform. This section equips you with the tools to prepare a pitch deck for external investors, whom you would like to persuade to fund the development and/or deployment of your platform. This is an optional step and is required only if you seek external funding. As an outcome of this section, you will create a deck that can be used to communicate strategy and raise funds.



### Concept of Effective Communication for Fundraising

Fundraising is a function of effective communication to the right set of stakeholders. It is crucial to convey to the prospective funders what problems your platform offers solutions to, what your requirement is, and how you plan to utilise the funds. As most social entrepreneurs will be in different stages of their journey, the ask from the funder varies. Based on the stage you might:

1. **Require funds for development of your platform solution:**  
In such a case, your pitch should focus on the problem you wish to solve and how the platform solution will enable you to achieve this change. You should look for early stage investors or seed funds.
2. **Require funds for deployment of your solution:**  
If you have already developed the digital platform solution and require funds to implement it at the prototype or expansion stage at scale, you should focus on the results of your pilots and the potential that your platform solution holds when implemented at scale. Accelerator funding will be more useful at this stage.
3. **Require funds for both development and deployment of your solution:**  
In case you are yet to develop the prototype of your platform solution, but you wish to raise funds for both the development and deployment stage simultaneously, you should present a strong case for the platform play and account for all risks associated with the prototype phase and the iterations required.

One of the ways to communicate your requirements to prospective investors is to create a pitch deck. The pitch deck is instrumental in communicating the purpose of your platform, its mission and technology design, and fundraising objectives to the intended funding organisations. While the specifics may vary, an effective pitch deck has the following characteristics:

- The language used in the deck should be **simple, clear and concise**.
- The pitch deck should flow seamlessly **like a structured story**.
- It should **establish a connection between yourself (or your team) and the investor**.
- It should provide a **clear breakdown of how the funds will be utilised** by your organisation.
- It is a good practice to create **two versions of your pitch deck**, one which is meant to be read and the other which needs to be presented. **The deck which needs to be presented should not be too text-heavy**. It is ideal to provide the investor with a **one-slide summary of the platform solution**.



### Exercise 12: Developing the Pitch Deck



This exercise will enable you to produce your pitch deck which you will use to communicate the platform plan and funding requirements to various funders. While this template would help you structure your pitch, it can be modified to suit the context of your platform. It is essential, however, that your pitch deck clearly brings out

1. The magnitude of the problem your platform addresses and the urgency to solve it;
2. A well-crafted, clear mission statement;
3. Operational and design aspects of your platform, and how users will interact on it;
4. Potential impact of the platform;
5. Platform implementation plan and fund requirement.

As mentioned before, it is a good practice to condense your pitch deck into a **one-slide summary of the platform solution** to share with the investors.



*We encourage you to use your creative skills to bring out your story effectively. However, make sure you are crisp and to the point in your communication.*



### Reflections

- How can you identify like-minded and interested funders and investors to pitch your platform to?
- How can you further strengthen your pitch deck?



### Additional Resources

- [Writing a Strategy and Approach Document for Societal Platform Missions: How-to-Guide](#)
- [The Pitch Path: An Ultimate Guide to Pitching a Major Donor](#)

## OUTCOMES CHECK-IN

As you end this module, we would like you to reflect on your journey. You may use the following questions for the same:

- ✓ Have you been able to identify your internal and external capability requirements?
- ✓ Have you been able to align your organisation's strategy with the platform solution?
- ✓ Have you been able to validate your business plan/pitch with relevant mentors and advisors?

## GOING FORWARD

### What have we learnt so far?

This fieldbook has offered you insight into how digital platforms can be developed to resolve societal problems at exponential scale. In the course of this journey, you have identified the societal problem you wish to resolve, and established the platform functionalities that would help you in the process and create value for your actors through the core interaction. You have also identified the technical and other capabilities that would facilitate the core interaction, and how you would actualise these to deploy your platform. This fieldbook has equipped you with the competencies to realise the first run of your platform, however, this is only the first milestone in your journey as a platform orchestrator.

### Challenges going forward

As you move through your platform journey you may encounter some of these challenges.

- The foremost challenge is considering your view of the problem, the systemic factors affecting it, and employing systems thinking to **distil the core interaction** that would be conducted on your platform. Even as the societal problem you wish to address could appear multi-faceted, you would have to reflect and rethink it to define your core interaction in concrete, quantifiable ways.
- The success of digital platforms relies on their **users' access to digital tools** such as smartphones and the internet. Many people still don't have easy access to smartphones and the internet, especially in rural areas. You would have to ensure that they also can benefit from the value the platform creates, and that your platform does not exclude, or plans to include, hitherto underserved segments of the population. At scale exclusion can create large unintended negative consequences.
- Developing and deploying a prototype requires **patient, or long-term capital**. As you experiment with multiple iterations of your platform design, you will require long-term capital to sustain it, and you might have to ensure its availability at certain intervals.
- Defined metrics of success for platforms for "the good of all" do not yet exist. Business platforms, which tend to focus on user acquisition and retention to measure performance, do not offer a sustainable, sufficient or exhaustive model to measure the societal impact your platform generates. Hence it is important to learn about and evolve metrics of success that can help you track your societal impact.
- Technology is the backbone of digital platforms. As you develop your platform, it is crucial to onboard a partner who not only brings in technological expertise, but is also equipped to visualise your solution from a platform lens. Your platform's success would be greatly contingent upon the **right mix of product and technology** experts that you have in your team.
- Another challenge could be **establishing alignment with your board**, on various facets of operation. This would be a continuous process to ensure that the platform's success metrics are met and mission objectives continue to be achieved as the platform progresses.

### Opportunities for Platforms for the good of all

This journey will also create new opportunities for you to achieve the impact you strive for.

- By design, platforms allow engagement of networks of actors in co-creation and exchange of value at scale, which wouldn't be possible through conventional channels. Your platform therefore enables you to **achieve impact at scale**, supported by tech infrastructure.
- Digital Infrastructures are increasingly becoming more prevalent in the initiatives by the governments around the world, developing your platform as a force for good, will position your mission as a leader in the sector you operate in and provide you important insights about the ways technology can empower or disempower society.
- Through your platform, you contribute towards **developing pathways for digital infrastructure** in the sector you operate in. This is especially important if your platform is one of the prime movers in the sector, enabling the establishment of a digital foundation for future interventions.
- Building a successful platform requires the mission to develop the skills of the orchestrator, who helps the system develop a shared common vision and engages the stakeholders in constant value exchange. This is an opportunity for your organisation to empower the entire sector and networks of co-creators as opposed to scaling a single solution.

### Key milestones in the platform journey

In our experience the journey of a social entrepreneur utilizing digital platforms follows a certain pathway. While the pace of the journey would vary depending on your context, you would typically find yourself developing these key capabilities and achieving these critical milestones in the initial 2 years of developing your platform.

**Define a clear platform strategy:** You will need to develop strong impact metrics, and consistently evaluate if the platform is achieving the mission objectives. You will also need take stock of internal capabilities at regular intervals, and recalibrate your hiring/expansion plans accordingly. As your platform grows, you would also require a clear plan to engage new actors and align with both external and internal stakeholders.

**Raise capital to sustain the platform for the initial three years:** This is a generally observed timeline for your platform to take shape and make a tangible impact within the community, this period would be marked by multiple iterations, redesign, team expansion, as well as contingencies. It is therefore crucial to ensure that you are able to secure capital that sustains your organization during this time.

**Validate the platform interactions in the community:** Not only would your platform meet user needs through a clearly defined core interaction, you will constantly identify and resolve bottlenecks that users face during real-time use. It would also be crucial to monitor that your actors continue to derive value from the platform as it evolves.

**Eventually your platform will start to create network effects:** The platform will create tangible impact on the users, and as new users join, these effects will be amplified for all involved. As your platform and the network, it supports become an important actor, the ability of your organization to orchestrate the larger eco-system will need to evolve and deepen.

The promise of platform thinking in improving societal outcomes is becoming increasingly evident as organizations adopt it.

There is no better time than now to make this happen.



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## GLOSSARY

<b>Actor</b>	An actor is an entity with a distinct and independent existence. Actors can represent an individual, institution, organisation, or even resources. Actors interact and relate to other things and can influence decisions.
<b>Co-creation</b>	Co-creation is the collaborative development of new value (concepts, solutions, products and services) together with experts and/or stakeholders (such as users, suppliers etc.). It is a form of collaborative innovation: ideas are shared and improved together, rather than kept to oneself.
<b>Alignment</b>	Alignment refers to the readiness of the platform solution to be implemented/ taken to the market. This alignment is with both internal and external factors.
<b>Interaction</b>	An interaction is an action that describes what an actor does with respect to other actors. Like actors, interactions too can refer to a variety of things: a connection between actors, the transfer of goods between actors, the transfer of information between actors, etc.
<b>Mission Statement</b>	A mission statement is used by an organisation to explain, in simple and concise terms, its purpose(s) for being.
<b>Pitching</b>	Pitching refers to presenting your platform idea to another party, potentially an investor. The pitch needs to give your audience a clear understanding of your plan or goals to gain buy-in.
<b>Platform</b>	A platform is a model that creates value by facilitating connection and exchange between two or more interdependent groups, usually consumers and producers, thereby creating network effects.
<b>Problem Statement</b>	A problem statement is a concise description of an issue to be addressed or a condition to be improved upon.
<b>Stakeholder</b>	A stakeholder is an individual, a group of individuals or an institution that influences or is influenced by any decisions or activities related to the platform.
<b>Societal Thinking</b>	A systemic approach, a set of values and specific design principles, to reimagine social problems, redesign core interactions between key actors of society and induce exponential social change.
<b>Systems Thinking</b>	Systems thinking is a holistic approach of analysis that focuses on the way that a system's constituent parts interrelate, and how it intersects with and interacts with other systems/structural forces.
<b>Templates</b>	A template is a particular model for arranging information that you can copy and use for your own purposes.
<b>Touchpoints</b>	Touchpoints are user actions and interactions with the product/business.
<b>Value Unit</b>	A value unit refers to something that is beneficial or important to an actor.

## ABOUT THE ORGANISATIONS



Ashoka's vision is a world in which Everyone is a Changemaker: a society that responds quickly and effectively to challenges, and where each individual has the freedom, confidence and societal support to address any social problem. Ashoka is the largest global network of leading social entrepreneurs – individuals with new ideas to systemically address the world's biggest challenges and the entrepreneurial skill to transform those ideas into national, regional and global social impact. Over 40 years, Ashoka has supported more than 3,600 social entrepreneurs in 90+ countries with solutions addressing society's most pressing issues.



Societal Platform is a community of curators, catalysts and network weavers. Our community pools individual strengths and channels collective imagination to enable social change leaders to advance their missions, anchored in Societal Thinking. SP enables change leaders to discover and engage with the idea of Societal Thinking, and supports them in their journey of solving large and complex societal problems.



In 2020, Ashoka and Societal Platform joined forces to launch ASPIRe. Supported by Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies, the joint initiative seeks to explore and learn how platforms and platform thinking can be leveraged by social entrepreneurs to support their system-change work and scale up impact.



RNP believes in healthy, vibrant, active communities and networks. In the continuum of *samaaj* (*society*), *bazaar* (*market*) and *sarkaar* (*government*), only a strong society can keep markets and the state accountable to the public good. RNP's philanthropy looks to support ideas, individuals and institutions doing ground-breaking work that enables a strong *samaaj* with ethical leadership, a sense of urgency and the courage to learn.



Sattva is a social impact strategy consulting and implementation firm. Sattva works closely at the intersection of business and impact, with multiple stakeholders including non-profits, social enterprises, corporations and the social investing ecosystem. Sattva works on the ground in India, Africa and South Asia and engages with leading organisations across the globe through services in strategic advisory, realising operational outcomes, CSR, knowledge, assessments, and co-creation of sustainable models. Sattva works to realise inclusive development goals across themes in emerging markets including education, skill development and livelihoods, healthcare and sanitation, digital and financial inclusion, energy access and environment, among others. Sattva has offices in Bangalore, Mumbai and Delhi.

