

Opportunity

A social innovation opportunity is a high-level strategic area of focus. It can be internally facing (i.e. focused towards staff), or externally facing (focused towards beneficiaries, partners, donors or supporters). For example:

- Creating the next big thing in event fundraising.
- Reimagining our recruitment process.
- Maximising the benefit of our water and sanitation programs.

Social innovation projects should start with an opportunity as they set the direction for the rest of the process stages going forward. They ensure that all efforts spent in the process are adding strategic value and impact to the organisation and its stakeholders.

To identify social innovation opportunities, you should look to the following:

- The organisation's strategy to seek out strategic priority areas that would benefit from creative exploration.
- Current performance across internal teams ways of working or processes to seek out areas requiring efficiency or cost-savings.
- Performance across current social impact products, services or programs the organisation provides to find areas of improvement or opportunity.
- The ANGO industry environment to seek out gaps or shortcomings in the current industry offerings.
- The latest economic, political, technological, social and consumer trends to seek out those the organisation would like to react to and leverage.

What this tool will do

Social innovation opportunities are deliberately broad so that we have scope to explore and 'discover' many possible beneficiary, donor, supporter or partner problems to solve. By leaving the scope broad, we will not only be able to discover lots of potential problems to solve, but we will also be able to use exploratory research to pinpoint the problem with the most potential impact.

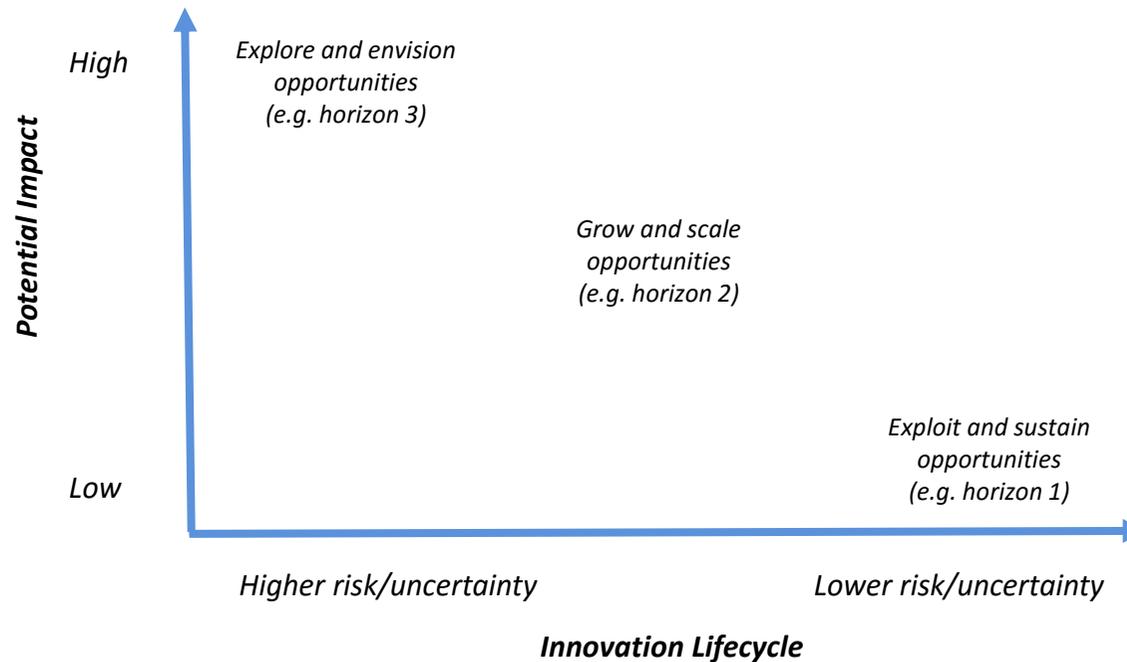
What this tool won't do

At this stage of the process, an opportunity will not provide you with the exact problem or solution that you will ultimately invest in progressing. This stage quite 'blue sky' and has a deliberately high level of uncertainty so that we're not assuming we know what the most impactful problem to solve is – we want to engage with our stakeholders to find this!

Case study - The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation dedicates its services to health care, however in 2014 the foundation's president announced that the organisation would widen its definition of health. This definition would not only include health care, but all things that effect health such as poverty, food security, adequate housing and assistance to the elderly. From this strategy shift came new social innovation opportunities, one of which lead to the idea of Health Leads. Health Leads enable doctors and other health care providers to prescribe basic resources like heating and food, just as they would medication.

It is likely that after working through your strategy, ways of working, current product/service performance, market performance and influencing trends, that you'll have many potential social innovation opportunities available to pursue. Because of this, you will need to prioritise these so that you're not only progressing those that will add the most value and impact to your stakeholders, but also so that you're diversifying your opportunity portfolio and hence hedging your risk.

To do this, map out all of your opportunities on a replication of the following matrix. Then using this completed matrix, select the opportunities that you think will balance both potential impact and your organisation's risk appetite.

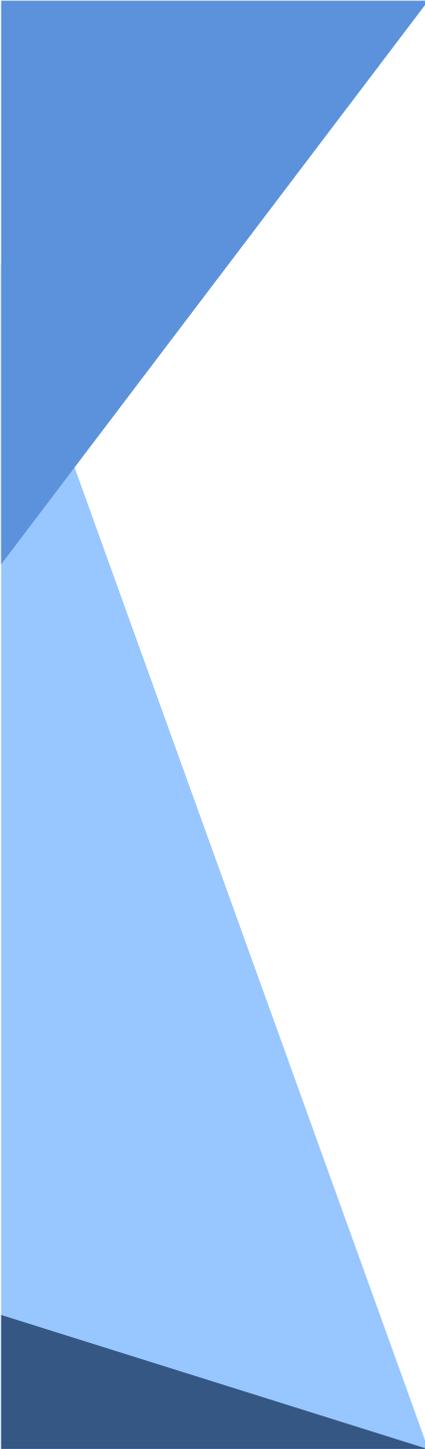


What this tool will do

Mapping your social innovation opportunities will help you create a balanced innovation portfolio in terms of risk and potential impact, and hence it will ensure that you're not 'putting all of your eggs in one basket'.

What this tool won't do

Despite using this tool to balance risk, it will not 100% eliminate the uncertainty or risk involved in social innovation projects. It will also not ensure that your innovation efforts are spread equally over all of your organisation's stakeholders. This is something that should be considered, and is another criteria that your organisation can use to prioritise which opportunities to take forward.



Once you have your chosen opportunities, you need to briefly detail the context, scope and target stakeholder of each:

- Context – What background information would the project team need to run this social innovation opportunity through the innovation process stages? Why was this opportunity chosen? What is the organisation hoping to achieve by tackling this opportunity?
- Scope – What kind of ideas or solutions are off the table (i.e. not wanted by the senior leadership team)? What kind of ideas or solutions are on the table (i.e. encouraged by the senior leadership team)?
- Target stakeholder – Who is the primary target stakeholder of this opportunity (this can be internal stakeholders such as all staff or specific teams, or external stakeholders such as partners, beneficiaries, donors and supporters)? Is there a secondary stakeholder? If so, who?

Now that each of your social opportunities have been detailed and scoped out, they are ready to be handed over to small project teams (2 to 8 people*) to progress through the next stage, Discovery. It is recommended that each social innovation opportunity has its own project team and executive sponsor so that teams are not overwhelmed with multiple projects at the same time.

*Note – The best project team members are employees who are open-minded, comfortable with uncertainty, resilient and thrive in team environments. It's important that you seek out project team members who are intrinsically motivated to participate, rather than extrinsically motivated, as they will be driven to push the social innovation project even when they come across hurdles.