



GUIDANCE TO SUBMISSION FOR THE CoLab AWARD FOR EVPA MEMBERS

CONTACT US

Please contact us if you have more questions or would like to become a CoLab partner:

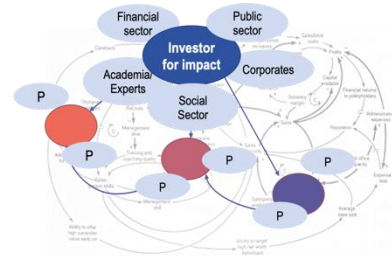
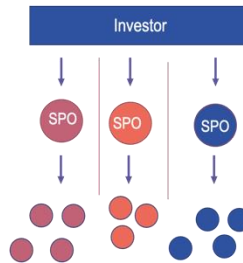
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1. BACKGROUND

WHY A CoLab AWARD AT EVPA?

As stated in Principle 1 of the [EVPA Charter](#) investors for impact are prepared “to address the **root causes** of a problem (...) and to look for solutions that have the potential to transform the way in which a problem is tackled”. In doing so, they recognise that such interventions can only be successful when going “beyond supporting individual social purpose organisations (...), by **building an enabling ecosystem** at local, regional, national and international level, by **collaborating** with their peers and (...) with others – including the public sector, traditional philanthropy organisations, NGOs, investors with impact or corporations.” (Principle 8 of the [EVPA Charter of Investors for Impact](#)).



System level interventions as described in the EVPA Charter require specific methods, processes and capacities to effectively deal with complexity, unpredictability and the interconnected nature of societal challenges.

The Covid 19 pandemic has been a magnifying glass for deeply rooted and persistent challenges. At the same time the crisis has led to the adoption of more agile investing practices, from new types of collaboration between unlikely allies, to the development of a new narrative around the contribution of impact capital providers in shaping the “New Economy” or “New Capitalism”.

At EVPA we therefore wish to raise awareness and support knowledge development on collaboration and system change practices in investing for impact. Our ultimate goal is to **increase resources directed towards systemic solutions** and make **investing for impact interventions truly transformative**.

WHAT DO WE HOPE TO ACHIEVE?

The CoLab Award **gives visibility to system change leaders** in the EVPA community and **acknowledges each awardee** for adopting collaboration and system change principles, practices and structures for transformative impact.





Furthermore, the CoLab Award promotes the **sharing of diverse approaches, tools and insights** of EVPA’s community, which we will start **collecting and systematising to enable peer learning and advance knowledge** both amongst our members and the international community of system change leaders and investors.

HOW AND WHY SHARE YOUR EXPERIENCE?

The CoLab Award is open to **all EVPA members** that are ready to share their practices and insights in collaboration and system change. All EVPA members who intentionally integrate collaboration and system change practices into their investing approaches are eligible. Submissions can be made alone or in cooperation with one or more other EVPA members.

This documents provides more information on what we are looking for. Furthermore, a CoLab Meet Up will be held to provide more information and answer any questions you may have ([please register here](#)). For your submissions please use the [submission template](#) on the CoLab Award website. For any more questions please contact Anja König on akoenig@evpa.eu.com.

Table 1 Why you should submit your experience

	<p>Increase your visibility and showcase your best practices on a dedicated online platform, at EVPA's CoLab Award Ceremony and in video interviews.</p>
	<p>Benefit from exclusive offers open only to CoLab Awardees - a dedicated CoLab Award Ceremony, a 1-day Deep Dive session in 2022, and more activities currently under development.</p>
	<p>Become part of EVPA's CoLab community of collaboration & system change practitioners. Upon submission you will receive an invitation to EVPA CoLab slack community of system change practitioners.</p>
	<p>Benefit from and contribute to international knowledge development on the role of investing for impact in collaboration and system change practices. We will use your submissions as a basis for in-depth research on common themes and practices.</p>

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

Between May and July information calls will take place to answer any questions applicants may have on the content and the format of their submission. Applicants will be requested to submit their applications before **September 20, 2021**.

The EVPA CoLab Team will identify noteworthy insights from each submission and put **each submission** on a public platform at least one month prior to the Award Ceremony scheduled to take place between November 15-17. CoLab post-award activities that are open to all CoLab Awardees will start in December and continue in 2022.

Figure 1 The CoLab Award Schedule



CoLab AWARD PARTNERSHIPS

Are you also convinced that we need to increase capacity and knowledge on investing for transformative impact? Would you like to support EVPA's efforts to enhance visibility of system leaders and support knowledge development on tools and practices that help investors for impact achieve transformative impact?

Please contact us to discuss partnership opportunities to support the COLAB Award ceremony and / or research, community building and other activities in the field of collaboration & system change!

2. WHAT ARE WE LOOKING FOR?

Thank you for your interest in taking part in the CoLab Award!

You may now wonder whether the experience and approaches of your organisation are relevant, whether you would be eligible and what exactly we are looking for as part of the Colab Award process.

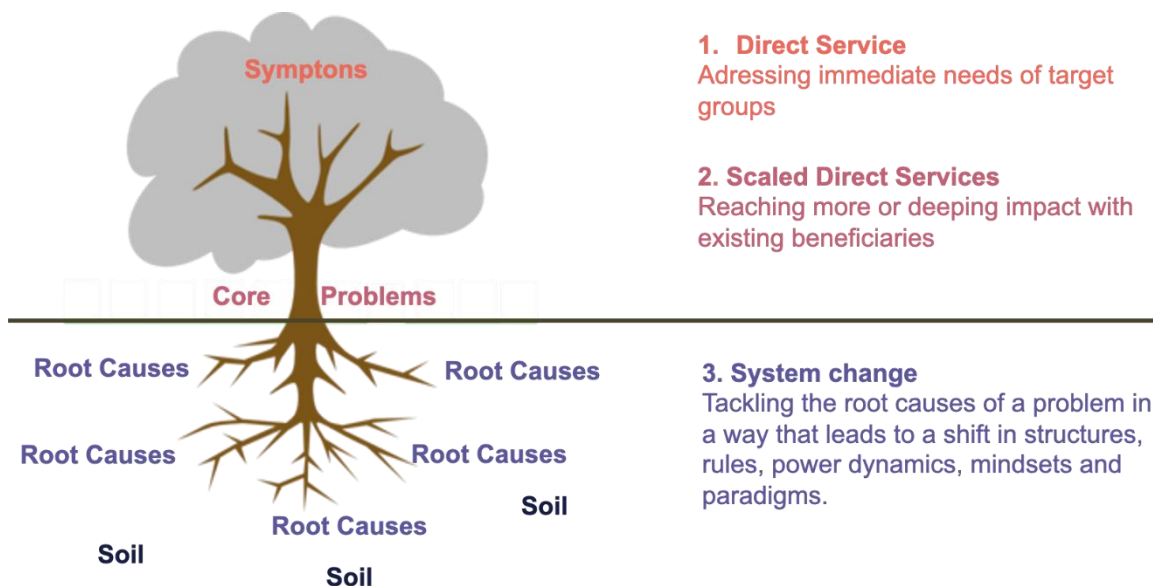
The field of collaboration *for* impact and system change is quite broad and can appear to be somewhat abstract and even confusing at first sight. Below you can find some concepts and ideas that we hope will serve as guidance to your submission.

KEY CONCEPTS

What do we mean with system change and collaboration?

For the purpose of the CoLab Award, **system change practices** focus on addressing root causes rather than symptoms by altering, shifting, and transforming structures, customs, mindsets, power dynamics and rules through collaboration across a diverse set of actors with the intent of achieving lasting improvement of societal issues on a local, national, and global level.¹

Figure 2 Symptoms and root causes



System practices become more relevant the more you seek to close the gap between what you can achieve with funding the delivery of direct services and the real scale and depth of the problems you as a funder seek to address. The interventions that are needed for system change are normally beyond what any organisation can address effectively alone, which is

¹ Based on [Embracing Complexity](#) – Towards a shared understanding of funding system change, 2020

why collaborations – and often **cross sectoral collaborations** between stakeholders from the public, private and social sectors – play a major role in system change.

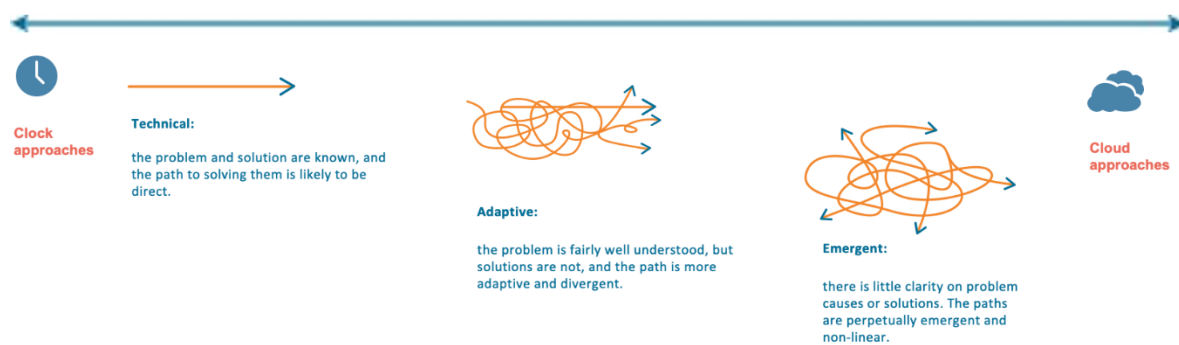
Why are we interested in your practices?

System level interventions as described in the EVPA Charter require specific methods, processes and capacities to effectively deal with complexity, unpredictability and interconnected nature of societal challenges (Figure 3).

The more you seek to address systemic root causes of a societal challenge, the more you will need to intentionally use practices, develop structures and processes that support you as an investor for impact:

- Truly understand complex challenges of the system in which you intervene;
- (Co-)design a strategy that can shift the system;
- Manage, evaluate and adapt your investments, non-financial support and operational activities effectively;
- Collaborate and engage with a variety of stakeholders; and
- become a “system leader” at both individual and organisational level.

Figure 3 Technical, adaptive and emergent practices



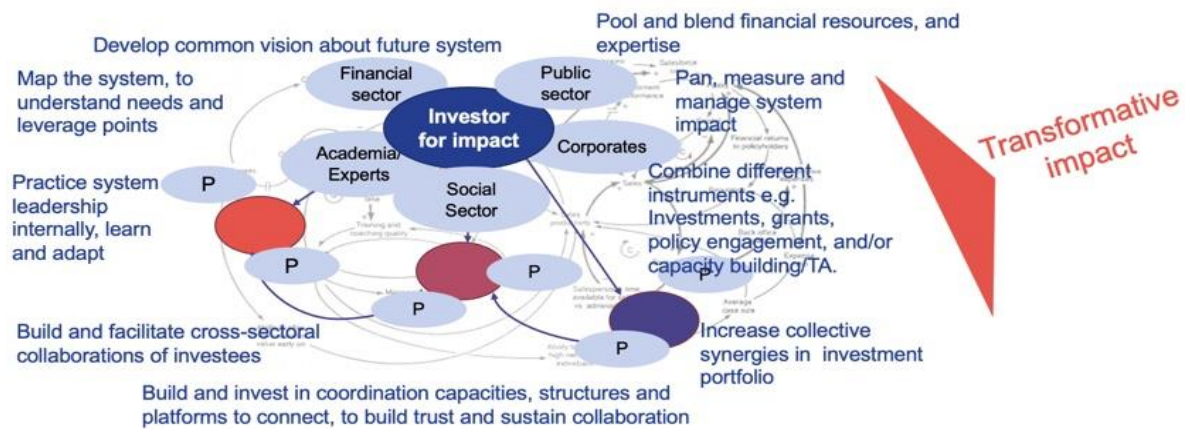
Source: Rob Ricigliano, Omidyar Group, Presentation as of October 2020

All of the above strategies and practices may well co-exist within your organisation: You may find some of your interventions support direct services to beneficiaries or target groups (e.g. feeding hungry people in an emergency situation, building shelters or schools, invest in innovative social start-ups) whereas others may be more systemic in nature (e.g. ensuring food security, addressing homelessness, building social innovation ecosystems).

FIELDS OF PRACTICES

We would be looking for examples of practices such as shown in Figure 4 below that allow us to better understand your approach and the experience you gained in relation to intentionally addressing the root causes of societal challenges, working collaboratively and seeking to achieve a transformative impact.

Figure 4 Snapshot of selected system practices



The questions in the application form are only intended to serve as a guidance and starting point. You may not have well developed system practices or experiences in each of the above fields (yet), but that does not matter! Please select the field(s) and practice that are the most relevant for the practice you would like to share here. Indeed, one practice or experience is sufficient as small as it may seem. It can be a practice that you feel has worked very well or on the contrary, a practice you introduced which did not work at all. Both are welcome if you share your lessons learnt and insights you gained during the process. Furthermore, you are of course welcome to share a practice that cuts across several or all fields. If they are not directly linked we would encourage you to submit the practices separately. Below we list a number of fields in which system practices are commonly applied:

Systems diagnostics

What practices do you use to enhance your understanding of the root cause of the societal challenge you are seeking to address with your funding or investment, to define the boundaries of the system you seek to impact and to define the best leverage points in the system?² Alternatively or in addition, do you encourage and support your investees and the wider field to carry out such a system diagnostic, do you support the process in any way and/or do you develop capacity and learning opportunities that help your investee better understand the systemic context and the root causes of problems they seek to address?

Strategy design

What practices help you to understand the best places to intervene in a system, the type of investees and partners you are looking for (or whether you would like to invest in networks and partnerships), the type of solutions you would wish to support, and the synergies in your portfolio or in the portfolios of others?³ Have you identified any “self-multiplying forces” and if so, how did or do you intend to you activate them? Do you have a clear intention to contribute to a shift in the (philanthropic) funding or investing system itself and if so, what are the tools and practices you apply?

² For example, problem trees, whole systems thinking, stakeholder mapping, systems mapping, systems dynamics, future enquiries or-sensing.

³ For example, living systems, iceberg models, Theory U, human centred design, design thinking, 5Rs framework etc.

Management, learning & adaptation

What principles and practices allow you to take unpredictability, complexity and emergence into account on your investing for system change journey?⁴ Are there noteworthy practices that help you become aware of and address power dynamics between you as investors for system change and your investees, your other partners and between system stakeholders? How do you monitor and evaluate whether the shift in systems is happening in the desired way? And what if the system is shifting differently from what you anticipated? How do you learn and adapt your funding and interventions (or enable your investees to adapt) in case of unforeseen circumstances?

Collaboration

Is collaboration key to your theory of change? If so, have you engaged with your peers mostly, or did you also engage with partners from other sectors, i.e. the public or financial or business community? Is your practice about co-investment involving partners with a different risk-return-impact profile from yours? Have you played a critical role in facilitating the creation of partnerships, networks, collective impact initiatives or in the coordination of collaborations that you are part of and if so, what methods, concepts and principles have you applied for this purpose? Or have you mostly supported your investees in forming and managing collaborations and if so, in which way? Please go more into detail about your collaboration experiences and describe e.g. how partners agreed on a common agenda, identified mutually reinforcing activities and shared impact management and measurement practices. Was there an entity to coordinate activities of different partners and if so how was it designed, financed, operated and evaluated? We are specifically interested in learning about collaborations with the public sector, the business sector and any cross-sectoral collaborations with a multitude of partners.

System leadership & governance

Have you thought about whether your organisational work culture and mindset, governance, staffing practices rather promote or inhibit your impact as an investor for system change? Has there been an internal transformation involving recruitment, cultural practices and others to enhance your impact as a system change leader and, if so, in which way? In hindsight, what has been successful, what has been challenging and remains a challenge? What are key leadership principles that characterise you as a system leader and can you provide details or examples of how they impact your funding or investing practice?

USE CASES

We distinguished six use cases that reflect the current interests and use of system practices by different EVPA member segments. The above fields of practices may emerge in any of the use cases listed below.

⁴ For example, adaptive implementation, agility, developmental evaluation, blue marple evaluation, the system change evaluation canvas, adaptive learning practices, iterative learning cycles, outcome harvesting, ripple effect mapping, social value.



Table 2 Use cases for system practices

Use case	Description
1. Social innovation in public services / with public authorities	Investing in social innovation pilots and joint programming with partners from the public sector, joint implementation and (local) government adaptation.
2. Place based funding	Recognition of mutually reinforcing interplay of barriers and challenges faced by vulnerable groups in a specific community and solutions to be found in alignment, collaboration or collective impact with local partners in a defined geographic area.
3. Transforming value chains and industries	Strategic investment and facilitation of collaborations (e.g. between innovators and corporates) along the value chain/product lifecycle or industries such as textiles, plastics or agriculture.
4. Open social innovations	Open innovation challenges, platforms and processes use wisdom of the crowd and institutions across social, private and public sector
5. Building impact (investing) ecosystems	Strategic investment in strengthening the relationships between ecosystem actors and generate a collective learning and innovation process to address social challenges.
6. Public – private (blended) financing vehicles and mechanism	Financing vehicles and mechanism that are either set up as public private partnerships investment funds or use government, EC or philanthropic funding to leverage commercial capital for impact (catalytic capital).