



Grand Challenges Canada®  
Grands Défis Canada

# Evidence generation for Transition to Scale

[Last updated May 2026]

As an impact-first investor, GCC looks for rigorous evidence of the causal impact of supported innovations in meaningfully improving health and development outcomes. This may be achieved either by demonstrating that rigorous evidence of impact already exists or proposing a credible plan to generate additional evidence of impact during the project period.

Existing evidence should come from previous pilot studies, impact evaluations or other forms of impact assessment, whether conducted by the applicant or another organization.

If there are gaps in their evidence base, innovators at TTS are encouraged to propose a robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) plan to measure impact using an evaluation design. In their MEL plan design and approach, innovators should consider the counterfactual – an estimate of what would have occurred in the absence of the innovation, such as a control group comparable to the intervention group.

Innovators MEL approaches should monitor or measure priority outcomes (e.g. improved health outcomes, lives improved) and/or intermediary outcomes (e.g., Improved timeliness and effectiveness of system response, increased adoption of preventive measures, or improved use of data in decision-making). A MEL focus on intermediary outcomes may be particularly relevant in cases where there is pre-existing evidence from peer-reviewed literature establishing linkages between intermediary (e.g. more timely and appropriate responses to identified risks or improved uptake of preventive and early response measures) and priority outcomes (e.g., reduced severity of health impacts).

For innovations that are well advanced on their pathway to scale, MEL approaches should consider generating evidence on what enables successful scale-up. This includes articulating clear evaluation questions on which delivery models are most effective and cost-efficient at scale; how the innovation can be adapted for new populations and contexts without compromising results, assessing whether the core impact mechanisms identified in the original

theory of change are maintained; and what system, policy, and institutional conditions are required to support long-term adoption and sustainability.

When proposing the MEL framework, innovators should use an appropriate research method and if applicable, ensure their approach is statistically powered. GCC welcomes proposals for a range of evaluation approaches, including observational study design, mixed methods research, quasi-experimental study designs, and Randomized Controlled Trials (RCTs).\* GCC does not prioritize proposals based on their intended research method but does expect innovators to provide a clear rationale for their proposed approach. Integrating qualitative elements to a MEL plan are not required but generally encouraged as a strategy to add valuable insights into mechanisms of impact, context and scalability.

\*A note on RCTs: Randomized Controlled Trials represent a gold-standard approach to establishing attribution of impact, and in the development sector, have proven to be feasible across a diverse range of contexts, sectors and innovation types. While not a requirement of TTS funding, GCC welcomes RCT proposals *when appropriate* to an innovator's plan based on the evidence base and objectives of their proposal.