In Memory of Dr. Pamela Hartigan

This work is dedicated to the memory of Dr. Pamela Hartigan, a thought leader in social innovation and a highly respected social impact educator. As my teacher and later my boss at the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford’s Said Business School, Pamela was a charismatic mentor. I learned an incredible amount from her work and perspective, and was grateful for the freedom she allowed me and the support she showed me in pursuing my own learning as her Deputy Director. I still gut-check many of my ideas by asking myself “What would Pamela say about this?” and her energy continues to shape my thinking and being. Hopefully she would be happy that these resources have been pulled together and shared, but I know she’d be even happier if you took something from this and used it to create a greater positive impact. In her memory, I hope this toolkit and gathering of resources does just that.

Note: This toolkit was designed to support educators who are preparing their students to enter Map the System, a global competition hosted by the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at the University of Oxford which is run across Canada in collaboration with RECODE, an initiative of the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation. It focuses on the Impact Gaps Canvas and other tools and training ideas an educator might use to prepare their students and is designed to be complementary to the resources already provided by the Map the System team.

This toolkit by Daniela Papi-Thornton is part of her wider forthcoming report on systems-led leadership education. That report will provide additional tools and ideas for how to adopt a systems-led leadership approach to social impact education drawing from examples compiled from interviews with many global educators. Look out for the full toolkit via the RECODE network and at www.systems-ledleadership.com

Additional resources that support this toolkit are available at www.systems-ledleadership.com/resources
Gratitude

Thank you to J.W. McConnell Family Foundation and the RECODE team, especially Chad Lubelsky, Jennifer Lockerby, Jake Wildman-Sisk, and Alexandra Schuller for their collaboration and support in making this toolkit available.

Thank you to the Clore Social Leadership Programme for their support, mentorship, and training. It was through their program that I wrote my Tackling Heropreneurship report, where I first shared the Impact Gaps Canvas, and came up with the ideas for Map the System, Apprenticing with a Problem, and other efforts listed in this toolkit.

Thank you to my former colleagues at the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship at Oxford's Saïd Business School, especially the late Pamela Hartigan, for giving me a platform to try out these ideas and for being excited about sharing our learning with others who can build upon it. The team we created and nurtured at the Skoll Centre was one of the best I've had the pleasure of learning from and each of them deserves my thanks and hugs. As their work relates directly to this toolkit, I want to specifically acknowledge Gianna Goulding for her incredible dedication to creating systems-led leaders as she continues to head up Map the System, to Lydia Darley for supporting her, and to Andrea Warriner whose prior leadership kept the team moving towards our north star during an incredible time of transition. While I am no longer working at the Skoll Centre, I am delighted to still be involved as part of the judging and support crew of Map the System and feel grateful to still be connected with this incredible team.

Thanks as well to Saïd Business School Dean Peter Tufano who gave Map the System, then known as The Oxford Global Challenge, it's first support and got it off the ground. Thank you as well to all those who have supported and funded the Global Challenge/Map the System to continue, including the sponsors and the educators from the 30+ universities now taking part of the competition. Special thank you to Dr. Foo Yin Fah of Sunway University who was the first educator to sign up as a partner in our trial year of the Challenge.

Thanks to my colleagues at Watson Institute, especially Eric Glustrom, Jenna O'Brien, and Aaron Patillo, for inviting me to turn this work into a course and partnering with me on doing so.

Many of the ideas for this work are related to and have benefited from the work my colleagues and I at Learning Service have worked on for many years. I’m delighted that our book will finally be coming out in 2018, and I’m grateful for Claire Bennett, Joe Collins, and Zahara Heckscher for our co-authorship efforts and to Red Press for making it real.

Thank you to all the educators and practitioners working in social-impact roles who tried out the Impact Gaps Canvas in their classrooms and teams and provided me with feedback on how to improve it. I’m grateful to the Ashoka U team for many opportunities to connect with and learn from a network of like-minded global educators and for opportunities to share this work with them as those efforts greatly improved my trainings on the Canvas. I would be remiss if I didn’t specifically mention my gratitude to the Aspen Institute Resnick Action Forum team, especially Alexis Ettinger, Tom Loper, and Kidd Solomon, for their help in improving the Impact Gaps Canvas. Together, we used it over three days with a group of over 200 people, and their efforts to help me refine the tool made it exponentially better.

Thanks to Andy Thornton for his constant support for my early morning writing sessions and for his feedback on all of my talks and ideas. “Great essay, boring speech,” is always the type of feedback I need to make things better. Thanks for holding the bar high. And thanks to Skye Thornton for being the light of our lives and the reminder why social impact education is needed to provide better opportunities for his future.

And most crucially, thank you to all of the social impact educators who have let me interview them and learn from their efforts. Thank you to those of you who are part of our global Google Group who allowed your resources and ideas to be shared here and in the online resource area. Some educators are noted by name in this toolkit and comments from others are listed anonymously when it was more appropriate to do so to protect their or their students’ anonymity. This shorter version of the toolkit is mostly reflections on my own work, but the forthcoming wider toolkit will include many more examples of first-hand stories from the educators I spoke with and a complete list of all those interviewed. I’m grateful to all of them, and to all of you, for your commitment to providing high-quality learning experiences for your students and for helping me grow and learn through this process.

While it might seem over the top to have such a long thank you list for such a short toolkit, it’s this interconnectivity and reliance on each other in the systems in which we work that this toolkit celebrates. I’m lucky and grateful to be circulating through such supportive and thoughtful networks of social impact educators and practitioners, and I’m grateful for the opportunity to share that thanks.
Introduction

My experience in the classroom, both at the front of the class and in the student’s seat, led me to believe these two things:

- There is an upswell of students sitting in classrooms right now whose concern for the size of their bank accounts is equalled or trumped by their eagerness to be recognized for the positive impact they have on the world and they are attracted by social entrepreneurship as a call to action.
- Many educational institutions have embraced pieces of the social entrepreneurship movement but have been slow to provide a more complete spectrum of support for students beyond the realm of social enterprise start-up initiatives.

My experience convening and providing workshops for other educators concerned with social-impact education has led me to believe:

- Many other educators are also concerned about the one-size-fits-all approach of offering social enterprise start-up education as THE tool for social change.
- Tools and practices for incorporating systems-led thinking into social innovation education can help educators provide a more robust offering for students.

This toolkit focuses primarily on the Impact Gaps Canvas system mapping tool and Map the System, a global competition based on that tool, which are two offerings I initially designed to help educators add a systems-led approach to their social impact education. If you work in a business school setting, a social impact incubator, or a training program for social entrepreneurship, this toolkit should hopefully serve as a practical guide for ways you might incorporate those tools into your offerings.

In 2016, I released a report, funded by the Clore Social Leadership Programme, called Tackling Heropreneurship that aimed to shine a light on the opportunity to move from a social business focus to more system-focused educational training. Many of the things I will share in this toolkit are the lessons my colleagues and I at the Skoll Centre for Social Entrepreneurship learned in trying to integrate the findings of that report into our work at Oxford, and my subsequent opportunities to share this work with students and educators globally. My thanks go out to my colleagues at the Skoll Centre and Watson Institute, as well as educators globally, for sharing in this learning so that we could bring it to others.

Note: This material, specifically chosen to support educators involved in Map the System, is part of a wider toolkit I am creating which looks at broader tools and tactics to support systems-led education. That toolkit involves interviews and contributions from many global educators (including some of you – thank you). Please look out for that in the coming months.

What do you mean by “systems-led”?

I use “systems-led” as a term to describe how action and strategy for educators, researchers, funders, and founders can be more effective at contributing to system change when those actions and strategies are built on an understanding of and a connection to a wider network of actors in the system.

Systems-led: Making decisions about your personal or organizational social impact strategy based on understanding the systems within which you work and then envisioning wider system change goals – goals you know you can’t achieve alone but which help guide your actions so that those actions connect with, build upon, and contribute to the wider impact of the collective.

It’s a move away from trying to solve the problem, as most system-level challenges are too large for any
one organization to “solve” and towards identifying a contribution, or a piece of an interconnected puzzle to which you and your network can contribute. Rather than viewing each organization as the unit of change, it instead requires looking at the collective impact of a wider system. It’s based on the understanding that complex problems or opportunities are rarely tackled through any one initiative but rather through a wider network of change. As such, students looking to have high-impact careers need support to find their own paths to impact, and doing so in a systems-led approach means social enterprise start-ups are only one of the many ways forward.

The Impact Gaps Canvas

While speaking at many universities, I noted that many of the competitions and class projects MBA students were invited to join required them to try to solve a complex challenge, but didn’t provide many frameworks, much time, nor explicit incentive to understand that challenge. Often students were incentivized to create a new organization or initiative, and then try to “prove” how that effort alone might scale to the size of the problem without being asked to look at, build upon, or connect to the efforts of the existing landscape of solution efforts.

The Impact Gaps Canvas was my attempt at making a tool to incentivize understanding before taking action towards a solution. While it might seem like common sense that one would seek to understand a challenge and learn about what is already being tried before jumping in with a new solution, it’s not common practice. Part of the disconnect between action bias and practical understanding is furthered by the way we teach, incentivize, and reward students. The Impact Gaps Canvas was designed to help shift that. It’s a common-sense tool that guides people through the questions they might need to ask to understand their chosen challenge and to understand the current landscape of solutions. By turning that tool into a global competition, the hope has been to make such a practice more common.

The Impact Gaps Canvas invites users to map two parts of the ecosystem and then identify “gaps,” or possible paths to increased impact.

• On the left, users are given a list of questions to help them map the ecosystem of a challenge: the numbers, causes, impacts, what is holding the challenge in place, who benefits from the current status quo, and the history and future of the challenge.

• On the right, they are asked to map the landscape of current solutions: what is already being tried, what resources are available which could be brought to bear in support of an improved network of solutions, what is being tried locally, and what tangential global efforts can be learned from.
• In the center, users are asked to analyse their learning and identify impact gaps: overlooked areas with opportunity for increased impact, key lessons learned from other efforts which could be used to increase the impact of the collective, ideas for changes or new efforts which could link up government, business, non-profit, or individual impacts.

I initially designed this tool when I released my *Tackling Heropreneurship* report, and since then I have personally had the chance to use it with more than a thousand people around the world, and thousands more have tried using it on their own or through the dozens of schools and universities which now incorporate the Canvas. Through using it, I realized areas for improvement as well as different use cases, which I will introduce. I updated the Canvas a number of times and the version you see here is hopefully more intuitive and thorough than the original.

Impact Gaps Canvas Use Cases

The Impact Gaps Canvas is one form of an ecosystem mapping tool, and any such tool has a variety of possible uses. While my initial identification of the value of this tool was for use in business school settings, it has now been used in high schools, PhD programs, businesses, foundations, and with community organizations and I believe it’s adaptable to a wide variety of contexts.

At its core, it asks users to do three fairly simple things: explain the facts they know or questions they have about the challenge, the facts they know or questions they have about the landscape of current solutions, and the gaps they have identified through their research.

When using it, the more research time you have, the more learning you get out of it, but sometimes simply identifying the questions you have about a challenge can significantly shift how you think about it. As such, the tool can be used in a 30-minute workshop, as the theme of an entire university course, or anything in between.

Some of the ways I have used it include:

1. Short Introductory Workshops (Page 7)

I have run dozens of workshops with students and impact professionals, some of whom have already identified the challenge they want to work on and others who have not. Sometimes the workshops were tied to a larger initiative, like an accelerator program or an impact consulting project, while on other occasions it was offered as stand-alone training. It can be used in groups, when many people are working on the same challenge, or in a room full of people each exploring their own issue.

2. University Courses (Page 10)

At Watson Institute, I teach a course on system change leadership, which is based around the Impact Gaps Canvas. Students use the Canvas over six weeks to learn more about their chosen challenge and are asked to shelve any solution ideas they have during this portion of the course, ideally helping them identify a range of paths to impact, including intrapreneurship, further research, knowledge sharing, or government roles.

3. Careers Support (Page 12)

I have used this tool as a way to help students identify possible internship or job prospects and as a way to prep students before career conversations.

4. Vetting or Application Tool (Page 12)

The Canvas can be used as an application tool for a range of programs, from training programs to “apprenticing with a problem” funding programs.
I initially designed the system mapping competition, now aptly called Map the System, around the Impact Gaps Canvas and it is a valuable tool for furthering student work in that challenge.

I will offer up some practical tips and lessons learned for utilizing the Canvas in each of those contexts below. While my focus for this toolkit is on how to support students, I want to note that I have also used the Canvas with professionals in these ways, in case they spark more use cases for you:

- **Existing social venture or funding organizations**
  I have used the tool with existing long-standing organization teams who want to reconnect with, re-evaluate, or better understand and articulate how their organization fits into a wider changing system.

- **Convening and aligning the collective**
  I have used the Canvas with groups of people who care about or are working in the same issue area as a way of sharing and mapping a collective understanding of the challenge and aligning on possible collective or connected actions.

**1 - Short Introductory Workshops**

I have run a number of short workshops on the Canvas which lasted from 30 minutes to a few hours, and I have found that sessions at least an hour in length can be more interactive while shorter options have tended towards explanatory. If the participants each already have a well-defined challenge they wish to explore, a short session can be very productive and practical. That said, I’ve found that many people find one of the hardest parts of this iterative, systems-led process to be defining their chosen challenge, so more time is needed where that part of the process has yet to be accomplished.

Other time considerations arise when people are asked to work in groups. For example, while using the Impact Gaps Canvas at the Resnick Aspen Action Forum in a room of over 200 people, each sub-group of ±8 participants had to first get on the same page about the boundaries of their chosen challenge. On the other hand, when working with MBA students at UCLA Anderson in a short 45-minute workshop, some teams of students had already spent time working together to understand their chosen challenge and were able to get use out of the Canvas very quickly. In a short workshop, my goal would be that after some hands-on experience using the Canvas, people walk away understanding how it might be useful in their work going forwards.

It’s most useful to run in a setting where people already have a challenge they want to research, but I have also run the workshop where we have assigned groups of people different topics at random. The only time I felt that the workshop did not work well was when I used it at an Ashoka U event for educators. There, I was reminded of something important to remember when using the Canvas: **it was designed to be used with challenges in a system.** In other words, a group of people will struggle to work on the Canvas together if the challenge is unique to each individual. Prior to the Ashoka U event, I had spent a lot of time thinking about the workshop format, yet hadn’t spent enough time thinking about the specific challenge I would give the educators, and in the end, the challenge I chose was not a system-level challenge. I asked them something like “What
is holding you back from having all of the students in your university become changemakers?” As such, each educator started thinking about that problem in their own university system – what was missing in the relationships, resources, or tools in their own context, which didn’t make for a successful group activity. Instead, if I had asked “What is hold us back from collectively shifting the education system so that all students walk out of all of our classrooms as changemakers?” the workshop might have been more successful. In the second framing, the groups who were working together would have been able to create a shared model of the collective system that encompassed all of their work. Keep that in mind when using this tool. If you have people working in groups, you need to make sure they are working on a system-level challenge that connects each of their unique contributions.

If I am given one hour to introduce the Canvas, I will usually frame the session in this way:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>±10 minutes</td>
<td>Context</td>
<td>Introducing the background behind the Canvas, Tackling Heropreneurship work, system change leadership examples, and how system understanding was a basis of different successful interventions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>±5 minutes</td>
<td>Canvas Overview</td>
<td>A high-level introduction to the Canvas and explanation/examples of what I mean by “facts and questions only”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>±5 minutes</td>
<td>Introducing Challenge Mapping</td>
<td>Introducing the left side of the Canvas and inviting participants to consider the facts and questions they have about the challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>±5 minutes*</td>
<td>Challenge Mapping &amp; Reflection</td>
<td>Workshop time for individuals or groups to brainstorm the questions they would want to answer to better understand the challenge, followed by a few minutes of group sharing and feedback on areas where I felt they could have explored further or thought about something differently.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>±5 minutes</td>
<td>Introducing Solutions Mapping</td>
<td>Introducing the right side of the Canvas and inviting participants to consider the solution efforts and resources they already know about, as well as the questions they have about the landscape of current solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>±10 minutes*</td>
<td>Solutions Mapping &amp; Reflection</td>
<td>Individual/group brainstorming about questions relating to the solutions landscape and a short group reflection/feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>±5 minutes</td>
<td>Introducing the Impact Gaps</td>
<td>Introducing the concept of impact gaps, followed by a short discussion about broad types of impact gaps.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>±10 minutes*</td>
<td>Final Q&amp;A and Wrap-up</td>
<td>Group reflection discussion, Q&amp;A, and final examples of how others have put the Canvas to use and how it might be useful as they take their work forward.</td>
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*Note that in my proposed one-hour session less than half of the time, only about 20-25 minutes, is free time for participants to workshop their challenge, which may not be enough time for your group. I, as a verbose Italian-American New Yorker, have found it hard to cut down the explanatory sections of the workshop, so with groups that need more workshop time, I prefer to offer the session as 1.5 hours, adding additional time to the challenge and solutions mapping sections and/or wrap-up discussion.
In the workshop, I explain that the Canvas does not accept “assumptions”, “generalizations”, or “guesses” – but rather invites people to explore facts, which have a source, or questions which, if answered, would provide a piece of the knowledge needed to fully understand the challenge.

In short workshops, I ask them not to try to capture facts during the brainstorming session, as they can take all the time they need after the session to research facts. Instead, I ask them to focus their time on generating questions – the range of questions they would need to know if they were really going to be an expert in understanding this challenge. I acknowledge to the participants that they might not ever (or at least not easily) be able to answer all of the questions they have about a specific challenge. I highlight that the point isn’t to list questions to which they know they can quickly find an answer, but rather to visualize what it would look like to know everything there was to know about the challenge, in an omniscient way, and then think about what questions might encompass that knowledge.

For example, some students were working on the lack of continuing education opportunities for doctors and were trying to understand how to bridge the medical skill-divide between doctors in different parts of their chosen country. Some of the questions they might want to know the answer to regarding the challenge landscape might be:

- How many doctors are in country X?
- How many are in region A vs. region B?
- Are the training schools in each area the same and do they have the same requirements to practice medicine?
- How many hours of continuing education hours do doctors in each region have?
- Where are the most reported complaints of poor medical care or lack of access to skilled doctors?
- Which areas of training are most overlooked?
- Are there areas of medical school training that aren’t up to date?
- If so, which? According to whom?
- Do doctors feel that they are trained enough to do their job well? In what areas have they expressed a need for more training?

Some of these questions are very high-level and the students could dig further into their core area of concern by asking deeper and deeper questions about their challenge. As noted previously, while some questions might be easy to answer through simple online searching or reading research reports, some questions might be too difficult to ever completely answer, or might require extensive hands-on research, but just thinking about them might help redirect their learning efforts.

Brainstorming the questions one would need to know to completely understand a challenge invites people to think about how they might learn more about that area. Even when finding the exact answer to a difficult question feels impossible, they might develop a proxy for learning more about that issue even if they aren’t able to find the complete facts.

It also invites people to be honest about what they don’t know. If the entire premise of their idea, or their belief about the need for their idea, is based on facts they don’t yet have, it can help reshape their next steps. I’ve watched many students go into this process feeling convinced about the new start-up or innovation they want to pursue, only to realize that there are big knowledge gaps underpinning the assumptions of their idea. For most students, this has led to shifting the priorities of their next steps including new areas of research and learning, and for many that has resulted in large shifts in how they view their intervention. It invites them to consider additional next steps, such as jobs and internships or partnering with an existing organization that is already tackling their chosen challenge.
Some students who undertook the Impact Gaps Canvas process after taking an entrepreneurship accelerator course in their university have expressed that they wished the process had been reversed, as they realized they’d spent a whole semester working on a business idea that wasn’t focused on the right part of the problem. Other students have come into the workshop planning to pursue a start-up idea and then realized that a job or internship with another organization in the existing solutions landscape might be a better next step for their personal impact. Others have continued to pursue their original idea, but have found new potential partners or cases from which they could learn, new ways of considering what scale might look like, and/or new questions they might want to ask in their research process to better shape their understanding of the challenge and how their efforts might contribute to the collective.

Ideally, the key message students walk away with is that social change can’t happen in a vacuum with one organization trying to innovate on its own, and that there is a plethora of knowledge from current and past efforts which can be built upon and connected to in order to create more impact. Many students have reflected that it helped dilute the bias towards being a founder and opened their mind to a range of possible personal next steps.

2 – University Courses

Personally, I have run only one multi-week university course on the Impact Gaps Canvas, so the sample size of my experience is low. That said, I will share what I learned from that experience, and ideas for improvement for when I run the course again.

I used the Impact Gaps Canvas over a six-week course (one three-hour class each week) with a group of students from Watson Institute. I gave them a goal of doing 10 interviews per week with anyone that would help them learn more about their chosen challenge or the landscape of current solutions. I gave them guidance and support on how to reach out to people for interviews, and a few more tools, built as support worksheets for the Canvas, as they went through the process. My course was followed by a six week course on ideation, and the premise was that they would use the six weeks with me to shelve their idea, focus on understand the ecosystem of their chosen challenge, and then identify gaps including possible next steps for their own efforts. By expanding those possible next steps to efforts beyond founding a start-up, the hope was that whatever next step they chose (research, pursuing a job, start-up, etc.) they could use the following ideation course to further plan their next steps and learn about the entrepreneurial process.

Here are the key things I learned while running the course:

- Challenge framing needs a lot of time

I had underestimated the time I needed to allocate to support students in framing their chosen challenge. While I always explain that reframing your chosen challenge is iterative and can shift many times for people as they go through a system mapping process, I hadn’t initially allocated enough time to the preliminary challenge definition portion of the class.

In the end, we needed to take much more time for that, but I think it proved valuable as a learning exercise for students in boundary setting and interconnectivity. I found that, initially, nearly all of the students defined their challenge within the bounds of their chosen solution. One example might be: “The challenge I am working on is how to reduce the gender gap in start-ups by increasing female founder support networks.” The student’s proposed solution—female-founded support networks—is built into their challenge definition, so I, or one of their peers, would push back and help them refine the challenge until the solution
had been removed and a wider range of gaps could be identified.

In discussing root causes and “Five Whys” we explored ways to dig deeper into the causes of perceived challenges. We discussed that sometimes the root cause of a challenge might not align with a student’s specific interests, so the challenge statement boundaries needed to be a balance of understanding the problem and understanding their own learning goals. For example, poverty issues might be an underlying factor in low education outcomes, yet the student’s interests were at the level of the education challenge rather than the underlying poverty issue. As the mapping process is designed to help students learn, I gave them permission to work at whatever level fit their interests, as long as they identified the root and connected challenges in their research.

- **The need for one-on-one feedback**
We built individual feedback on challenge statements into the course, which was easier to do with a small class, but could be done in groups with a larger class. While I did have additional one-on-one sessions with each student outside of class hours to further refine their ideas, many students would have liked more one-on-one time. My class of students at Watson were each very engaged in their issues, as Watson is designed around social entrepreneurial ideas, so perhaps the desire for increased feedback would be lower in a traditional classroom.

- **The link between personal and social development**
While I hadn’t originally built leadership work into my course plan, I find it hard to remove personal development work from social change initiatives. I ended up adding a number of leadership components into the course.

- **Separation from an entrepreneurship agenda**
My six-week course was followed by a six-week ideation course, and due to the logistics of the semester, the two courses were linked. While I think it’s important for students to learn entrepreneurship skills no matter what career path they hope to pursue, being linked to a start-up course likely incentivized some students to more eagerly explore start-up related impact gaps. The entrepreneurial bias in some institutions can create strong peer pressure to value entrepreneurship over intrapreneurship, therefore educators have a role to play in supporting students who want to pursue other paths.

- **Challenges vs. passions**
Some students, especially those pursing artistic pursuits, have trouble identifying a challenge to focus on in the course. For those students, the idea of doing challenge and solution mapping can seem very theoretical, as their drive is to pursue their chosen passion rather than a drive to solve a specific problem. I could have done a better job supporting those students at the beginning of the course to identify a challenge they were interested in learning about, even if it didn’t directly align with their career aspirations. While everyone did indeed settle on a challenge to explore, some took longer than others.

- **Realistic vs. stretch expectations**
While this tension is not unique to this course, I struggled with the balance between setting high expectations for my students and giving reasonable assignments. While Watson is unique in that all courses are related to the student’s social impact or entrepreneurial interests – meaning that assignments in one class can more easily support work in another course – a goal of 10 interviews per week was still probably too high.
While my course this year was only six weeks, in order to incorporate more guest lectures and more time for students to conduct interviews in pursuit of a more complete systems map, I would like to offer the course over 12 weeks in the future.

At www.systems-ledleadership.com/resources I have included my course outline for the six-week course as well as the associated worksheets, a possible course flow for a 12-week course, and a list of suggested readings that you might incorporate into such a course.

3 - Careers Support

I have used the full Canvas, or sometimes just some of the questions in it, when working with students who are looking for careers support. If a student tells me they are interested in working in solar energy in a certain region, or in a firm that uses design thinking to support social initiatives, I might ask them to map the challenge they are interested in and the landscape of current solutions. Who is working in the field? What different approaches are there, and who seems to be doing something interesting? In this way, they start to map out possible jobs and internship hosts while also learning more about their chosen issue. I find that the most committed students have already done this – they come into a careers conversation having already looked into the landscape of potential roles. On the other hand the students who want their hand held during the career process or who are not very sincere about their interest might not follow through with doing a little research before, which allows me more time with the most committed students and raises the bar of our conversations due to their prior research.

4 - Vetting or Application Tool

If we don’t tell students that systems-led thinking is important to us in our classes, social business competitions, and accelerator programs, they might not realize how vital it could be in their path to contributing to social change. By incorporating the Impact Gaps Canvas, or another system mapping tool, into application processes you can signal to applicants that you care about their efforts to impact change beyond the bounds of their organization.

At the Skoll Centre, in response to rethinking our strategy in light of the Tackling Heropreneurship findings, we made significant changes to our own funding opportunities, business plan competition, and application criteria and began incorporating the thinking from the Impact Gaps Canvas into that work.

Here are the key changes we made:

- Social business competition

We changed the criteria for our social business funding. Previously, you had to be a current student to apply for the £20,000 funding award. In essence, we were telling students that we expected them to succeed in rigorous full-time degrees AND at the same time be investment ready with their start-up by the time they graduated. Seems unrealistic, yes? But that is how many business plan competitions are run. I had pushed to create this award a few years earlier, and while there were some success stories in the mix (for example, Airbnb recently acquired Accomable, a prior award winner), many of the people to whom we gave funding were not investment ready and the funds were gone before the company really got off the ground.

We made these changes to the award:

- We opened the award up to alumni. We were then in essence saying to our students, “You don’t need to start a social venture the day you graduate. Go out, get a job in the sector you care
about, do research, learn more, and look for the best fit to use your skills to impact change. If you come across a unique way where you are able to add value, and that happens to be starting a new venture in two years or in ten, come back to us then. We are with you for the long haul. Our goal isn't to help you start new ventures – our goal is to help you contribute to solving important challenges by whichever path is right for you.”

- If you hadn't lived the problem you were trying to solve or couldn't prove that you had apprenticed with the problem to the point of really understanding it, you couldn't apply for start-up funding but could apply for our new funding, entitled “Apprenticing with a Problem”.

• Apprenticing with a Problem Funding

In Accomable’s case, the founders had not only lived the problem they were trying to solve (lack of access to relevant travel information for people with mobility issues) they had also already built a successful business and community from which they were able to launch their travel site. In other words, we had given them start-up money at the right moment of their journey, and were rewarding behaviour we wanted to see repeated: making decisions about how to contribute to change by gaining a deep understanding of the problem you are trying to tackle and gaining an understanding of the network of existing solutions so you can contribute to the collective.

We realized that in many of the rest of the cases of the start-up funding award, where the projects failed to launch, the students didn't have a strong understanding of the problem. As such, our award, which gave them funding tied to deliverables around a business model, was in essence dooming them to failure as their business models couldn’t be grounded in reality if the students didn't understand the reality of the problems they were attempting to solve. We also realized that many students admitted to not knowing much about the problem, and what they really wanted was a chance to learn more and to get their foot in the door to launch their career around their chosen issue. What those students needed wasn’t funding to launch a venture, it was funding to learn more so that they could figure out their path to impact.

However, in our case, and in the case of many educational institutions, there was only one pot of social innovation funding: funds to start a new venture. Thus students were knowingly submitting half-baked ideas for the competition as it was the only path we were offering them.

We realized that, in addition to the small number of students who applied for the start-up funding, there were also far more students who wanted that chance to launch their social impact careers and to learn more about the issues they most cared about, but that those students wouldn't ever apply to a business plan competition, as their goals weren’t tied to starting a venture. Instead they wanted to solve a problem, but didn’t yet know how to best get involved. “Why don’t we have funding to help these students?”, we thought – so we decided to create some.

“Apprenticing with a problem” was a term I heard Jessamyn Shams-Lau, Director of the Peery Foundation say in my interview with her for the Tackling Heropreneurship report, and I immediately loved it. With her permission, we borrowed the term for our funding. The Apprenticing with a Problem program provides funding for students to get an internship or job in their chosen sector, or to conduct further research about their issue. The goal is to help students find their path into a high-impact career, be that as an intrapreneur in government, businesses, or non-profits, or as a founder. Our hope is that this funding would help point them in the right direction, and if they did indeed decide to start a new venture, that the unrestricted and learning-centered nature of the funding would help set them up to create a venture that would be better poised to succeed.
Examples of Oxford winners who have used their funding include:

- A student from Hawaii who cared deeply about preserving indigenous cultures while providing economic opportunities, and who knew that communities in New Zealand had been successful at doing so. She spent over six months in New Zealand learning from a range of Maori organizations and is now taking that knowledge back to Hawaii to help the organizations in her network there to learn from that experience.

- A student from the Balkans who wanted to find a way to bring crowd funding to the region, but didn't know if it would be possible or if other efforts had already been tried and could be learned from. He and a team used their Apprenticing with a Problem funding to conduct interviews throughout the region and learn more about the legal barriers to success. They have since launched their venture, with the help of the learning and network they gained through their research.

- A student from India wanted to channel her corporate career in the hospitality sector into social impact in her home country. Through the Apprenticing with a Problem program, the Oxford team was able to connect her with Pratham, one of the largest non-governmental organizations in India, where she eventually got a full-time role leading a team focused on conceptualising and scaling sustainable models for upskilling youth from underprivileged communities in different trades in the hospitality sector.

Oxford, to be considered for the funding, they first needed to present their findings from the Impact Gaps Canvas via Map the System (more info following). Shortlisted candidates were then invited to send a funding proposal, and if their plans for the funding included a job or internship, they would also need to show a letter from their employer to confirm their placement. As a final deliverable at the end of their funded learning experience, students needed to write a public facing blog or report to share their learning with the world.

Tips and guidelines for how to run an Apprenticing with a Problem funding program were compiled by the Skoll Centre team as a means of spreading the program and are available at [www.systems-ledleadership.com/resources](http://www.systems-ledleadership.com/resources)

5 - Map the System

Map the System (formally known as Oxford Global Challenge) is a competition based on the Impact Gaps Canvas questions and format. Based on my research, I realized that the traditional format of social business plan competitions was fueling the heropreneurship problem. In addition to the changes we made to the Skoll Centre's social enterprise start-up funding, we realized we needed another draw to incentivize system mapping as a critical skill for change makers. We decided to create a global competition with these three goals in mind:

1. Change the conversation about social business plan competitions and spread system mapping.

2. Have the output of student submissions be valuable to others

3. Have students learn along the way
The competition is designed to have different deliverables than start-up competitions. Instead of winning because a student presents the best idea for a solution, a winner is chosen because they have the best understanding of the problem, the landscape of current solutions, and the impact gaps. In other words, students don’t need to feel like they have the answer to a problem or that they know everything about it to enter the competition, but instead apply because they have an interest in the challenge, and can use the process of the competition to learn more. In fact, if an entrant focuses too much on their idea for a solution, they are less likely to win than someone who says they aren’t sure what might be the best way forward, but who shares a lot of areas for improvement in the solutions landscape.

The first year we trialled the competition at Oxford and one partner university, the second year we ran it at 24 universities, and in 2018 it will run at more than 30 universities and colleges around the world. The concept has been embraced with a few other schools incorporating it into the path of their own competitions. University of San Diego’s Global Social Innovation Challenge now uses the same format of visual system mapping as the first phase of their competition, acknowledging Map the System as the source of that shift. The program seems well on its way to making a dent in the aforementioned goals.

Much more information about Map the System is available at [http://mapthesystem.sbs.ox.ac.uk/](http://mapthesystem.sbs.ox.ac.uk/) and post-secondary institutions that sign up to be a partner in the competition receive a robust toolkit from the Skoll Centre for implementing the contest at their own university. The winning students from around the world are then invited to Oxford to compete for funding in the final competition.

For those educators who are supporting students in the Map the System process, here are some key areas they might consider.

### Wrapping Map the System into a course

At Watson, I used the Map the System deliverables as my final course assignment. In this way, students get the support they need to create the deliverables and they don’t need to find extra time outside of their course assignments to dedicate to their initial mapping. I then narrowed down to the top five student projects and invited those five to continue with the Map the System process. We will hold a public presentation with judges to pick the Watson winner who will travel to Oxford later in the year.

In 2016, the J. W. McConnell Family Foundation’s program, RECODE supported the competition at 10 universities and colleges across Canada. One of those 10, Mount Royal University, created a course to support those who were enrolled in the challenge and who wanted to get credit for it.

Some of the sessions included work on thinking in systems, on the book “An Army of Problem Solvers”, and on presentation skills. The course professor, James Stauch, felt that those who took the course for credit fared better in the challenge overall, perhaps because they were incentivized to put more effort into the work as it also counted for course credit. He has made the curriculum for Mount Royal’s Directed Readings course, “Mapping the System: Thinking systemically about social & environmental change” public and it’s available at [www.systems-ledleadership.com/resources](http://www.systems-ledleadership.com/resources)

### One-on-one support

In an interview I conducted with him, James Stauch noted that in addition to the course material, he felt that the wrap around support they provided students outside of class was the most important benefit for those entering Map the System. The Mount Royal University team invited each participant into their office with a group of advisors and said to
each student, “How can we support you? Who can we introduce you to? We want to help you in any way we possibly can. You are already called to do this, but we’d love to help.”

Many of the other educators I interviewed noted the same thing: it was one-on-one support that was the most useful to students. Pam Garcia, who managed support for students entering the challenge at The University of British Columbia, noted, “[In the end] the calibre of student submissions was very high, but that was after spending 4-5 hours each with the top teams. I read their submissions and supported them throughout the process. I was able to invest that time, but they needed a lot more [time and] support than we thought.”

Another educator noted, “We underestimated the time it takes to coach the teams. Even when they got to Calgary – we saw that our teams were not prepared to the level they needed to be.” Another said, “the business school students came with solutions, and I had to do a lot of work with them to refocus on the problem.”

While one-on-one support may take a lot of time and effort, it may be key to helping students take what they are asked to achieve in Map the System and turn it into practical action for their own careers.

### Picking judges

Many of the educators I have spoken with who are implementing Map the System in their own institutions had concerns about finding the right judges. It’s good they are considering this, as many of those who have run the challenge in past years have noted that the judges they pick could make or break the success.

Many educators noted that judges they picked were biased towards solutions rather than picking students who best understood the system of the challenge. This is likely because most social innovation competitions are indeed asking for solutions, and judges are used to picking those. An educator I interviewed noted, “the questions the judges asked were more around solutions, but we were trying to tell the students it was really about the problem.” As James Stauch of Mount Royal noted, “there needs to be someone to support the judges and hold them to the values of the competition.”

Educators running Map the System at their institution might consider these tips:

**Pick judges who are used to looking at systems-level problems:** This might include:

- People who run progressive foundations and who are used to looking at a variety of challenges and interventions through the lens of system change
- Government employees who have specifically led system change initiatives or similar research
- Educators who understand system challenges
- Systems-led entrepreneurs or intrapreneurs who have used a systems lens to further their work

- **Conduct judge training:** This might include:
  - Sharing materials from this toolkit and from the Skoll Centre resources with judges before the Map the System presentations
  - Conducting a training call or webinar to clearly mark the different between business plan competitions (where the winners have the best solutions) and Map the System (where the winners have the best understanding of the problem, solutions landscape, and a range of gaps)
  - Conduct a review of those same parameters on the day of the competition prior to the start
  - Have someone from your team in the room during the judging and deliberation process
to hold the judges to rewarding problem understanding rather than specific solution identification

- Provide written feedback to students:
  If judges know they have a place to provide feedback or support to students outside of the judging Q&A period, they might be more inclined to honor the intentions of the competition. Sometimes judges are just so excited about the idea or the issue students are exploring that they want to use that time to provide ideas rather than questions or feedback on their Map the System effort. Feedback forms can either be created as a form for each judge to fill out, and then someone on your team needs to compile them afterwards, or if a team member is in the room, they can be typing up feedback from each judge during the deliberation and discussion period between each presentation.

Entrepreneurial judges are often the ones who need the most support to stay focused on the problem. For example, we picked an amazing system entrepreneur to be a judge in one of the pre-Oxford competitions last year, and while she certainly understands what is required for systems-led leadership, she is also someone who is easily excited about students’ solution ideas. This is not necessarily a bad thing: she offered a ton of feedback to these students as well as contacts and resources after the competition. We had to remind her, and other similarly solution-focused judges, that we needed to pick a winner within the bounds of the competition rules, but that that didn’t prevent us from helping the more entrepreneurial focused students on their ventures after the competition. She, and many other judges, were certainly helpful in providing students with venture related tips and contacts, as well as ideas for jobs and internships for those pursuing intrapreneurial paths, but as Map the System organizers, we need to remind judges to hold that advice until after the finalists have been picked rather than giving it during the judging question time. In this way, the judging period can be focused on the bounds of the competition, but students can still receive feedback on their personal next steps as a bonus feature of the competition.

- Taking research into action
  During these first few years of the competition, I have noted that many students have indeed been able to use what they learned in the competition to make headway into a high-impact career of their choosing, even if they weren’t a winner. I also noted that some student groups created valuable research, and while some of the entries only touched the surface of a problem, some brought together insights and learning which could make a real contribution to their field.

In order to help make the competition valuable in the long term to all students, educators can help support them to think about how they might use what they learn beyond the contest, no matter the outcome of the competition. Apprenticing with a Problem funding is one way to do that, but another way is to meet with each group after the contest and ask them, “What’s next?” A short training on how to take your research into action might be helpful for all students. If you want, this can even be conducted for 30 minutes between the presentations and the judges final deliberation, so that each group has a chance to brainstorm their next steps around their challenge without the drama of feeling like they won or lost the competition. I’d ask the students how they are going to share what they learned, such as sending it back to the people they interviewed to show them their learning, or publishing it on a blog or in some other venue so others interested in the topic can learn from their efforts. Educators might support those looking for jobs in the sector by helping students distil what they have learned about the landscape of current solutions to find a fit that matches with their skills and interests.
Conclusion

Incorporating a systems-led approach into your teaching will hopefully lead students to finding paths to contribute to wider system change. If they go on to launch or work in a start-up, they will hopefully create efforts that are better connected to the landscape of current solutions. If they are looking for internships or jobs, understanding the system might help them identify the root cause of their chosen problem and possible personal roles in the collective solutions efforts. And if they are on a research track, thinking in systems might help them create more actionable research.

Hopefully these ideas for how to use the Impact Gaps Canvas, or any other system mapping tool, will be useful as you design your courses. And if your institution is part of Map the System, hopefully these ideas will help you consider how you might support your students in that process.

If you are a social impact educator, reach out at www.systems-ledleadership.com to be added to a Google group of like-minded educators. If you want to contribute to a wider version of this toolkit which will include resources from a larger group of educators, please also reach out on my website. And if you want to download and use the resources noted in this toolkit visit www.systems-ledleadership.com/resources
IMPACT GAPS CANVAS

What’s happening, what’s the impact of the challenge, and what’s holding the challenge in place?

What is missing that could close the gap between the challenge and solutions, where are opportunities for collective impact, and what are the lessons learned?

What models are already being tried, what’s working, what’s not, and what resources are available?
**Impact Gaps Canvas**

**Guiding Questions**

**How do you describe the challenge?**
How do those most impacted describe the challenge? How do they describe the effects? How is this challenge related to other challenges?

**What is the impact of the challenge?**
What are the numbers? Who or what is impacted (where, how many, in what way)? What does the most up to date research say?

**What is the cause of the challenge?**
What is causing the challenge to persist? Who stands to benefit from the challenge continuing to persist?

**What is the history and future of the challenge?**
How has the challenge changed over time? What is the projected scope of the challenge in the future?

**Where are the gaps between the challenge and solutions?**
Who or what is not being served and what is missing to bridge that gap? What actions can be taken to fill the gaps?

**Where are the gaps within the solutions?**
What is missing (specific regulations, knowledge sharing, new efforts, partnership etc) that would further link up the solutions and achieve greater collective impact?

**Where are the unaddressed obstacles?**
What is being overlooked? What are the unintended negative consequences of the existing efforts? What specific key opportunities could unlock future impact?

**What are the key lessons learned?**
From your research and interviews, what key lessons could you share with anyone who wants to impact change in this sector? Where are the biggest opportunities for impact?

**What models are already being tried, what’s working, what’s not, and what resources are available?**

**What is happening locally?**
What resources are available that could be drawn upon? What efforts are already being tried which could directly impact the challenge? What are the different models? How are they joined up, or not?

**What is happening globally?**
What has been tried on similar or tangential challenges globally? What lessons can be learned from those efforts? How can those lessons be shared?

**What's working, and what's not?**
What can be learned from the successes and failures of these efforts? What do those involved attribute to the cause of their results?

**Where is the focus and the future?**
What parts of the challenge are focused on and what are ignored (specific populations, areas, etc)? What is on the horizon that might impact collective solutions? What future scenarios might play out?

**Learning Log & Actions**

What resources and people have you connected with to understand the challenge and solutions landscape? Who else do you need to speak with, and what do you still need to learn in order to fill in your knowledge gaps? What can you do to improve your understanding of this challenge or to take action to fill a gap?