

# AGING<sup>2.0</sup>

---

## WHITE PAPER

ADVANCING A CULTURE OF  
INNOVATION IN SENIOR CARE

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

What is Innovation?

Why Innovate in Senior Care?

## 1.0 LAY THE FOUNDATION TO INNOVATE

1.1 Set the Intention

1.2 Create an Effective Innovation Leadership Structure

1.3 Commit Resources: Money and People

## 2.0 DEVELOP AN INNOVATION FRAMEWORK

## 3.0 ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY

3.1 Clients and Families

3.2 Frontline Experts

3.3 External Partners and the Greater Community

## 4.0 MOVE BEYOND BETA

4.1 Measure Success & Tell the Story

4.2 Scale

## CONCLUSION

## SOURCES

### WORKGROUP:

Trish Barbato, Chair, SVP, Innovation & Strategic Partnerships, Revera Inc.

Rob May, Chief Technology Officer, Mary's Woods

Kari Olson, Chief Innovation and Technology Officer, Front Porch

Sheri Peifer, SVP & Chief Strategy Officer, Eskaton

Andrew Smith, Director of Strategy & Innovation, Brookdale Senior Living

Sarah Thomas, Sr. Director of Global Innovation, Genesis Healthcare

Jane van Alphen, Director Programs and Operations, Baycrest Health Sciences

### EDITORS:

Scott Peifer, Vice President and James Schembri, Associate, Aging2.0

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Innovation is coming to senior care. But what does that actually mean? Why do we need innovation in senior care, and how should providers go about developing innovation programs?

Innovation for companies in the senior care and longevity markets is especially important due to the enormous growth in the size, and changing needs, of the older population - and the increased competition in servicing those needs. Adopting a culture of innovation will enable senior care providers to take full advantage of the latest ideas and products to both enhance existing services and develop new ones to improve the lives of older adults. It will also help ensure their relevance and competitive advantage in the marketplace.

With this imperative, Aging2.0 has compiled recommendations and best practices from Aging2.0 Alliance members. The paper is intended for all providers of senior care – from in-home to residential care and skilled nursing.

The paper presents recommendations and best practices for advancing a culture of innovation in four key steps:

- 1 LAY THE FOUNDATION** for innovation by setting a clear intention, creating an effective leadership structure with executive-level accountability, and committing the human and financial resources needed to make innovation real in your organization.
- 2 DEVELOP A FRAMEWORK** for innovating. Be able to objectively screen incoming innovations and internal ideas to determine whether they fit with the organization's strategic goals, and then create the process to pilot and potentially scale.
- 3 ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY** to design, vet, and deploy innovations by actively involving older adults, frontline staff, and external partners in the process.
- 4 MOVE BEYOND BETA** by measuring success with strong metrics, telling the story, and pursuing scale.



Shake, stir, and repeat. Much like a muscle that gets stronger with constant use, innovation requires practice -- and even failure -- to realize measurable gains. Your organizational courage and ability to take strategic risks will become stronger as you bring innovation to life.

# INTRODUCTION

Becoming an innovative organization requires a deliberate and intentional corporate-wide shift. A shift to a culture that supports continual investment in new tools, approaches, and products to simultaneously enhance the customer experience and quality of care while optimizing employee and company performance.

Aging2.0's recent [Senior Care Innovation and Technology Use Survey](#) indicated that sixty-one percent of participating organizations ranked innovation as very important to their overall business strategies (5 on a 1-5 scale). More than half indicated having full-time employees directly involved with innovation.

# WHAT IS INNOVATION?

Innovation has unquestionably been the buzzword of the decade in business and education, and is considered by many the “key to the future.” But the overuse and generalization of the term has also diluted the understanding of what it means.

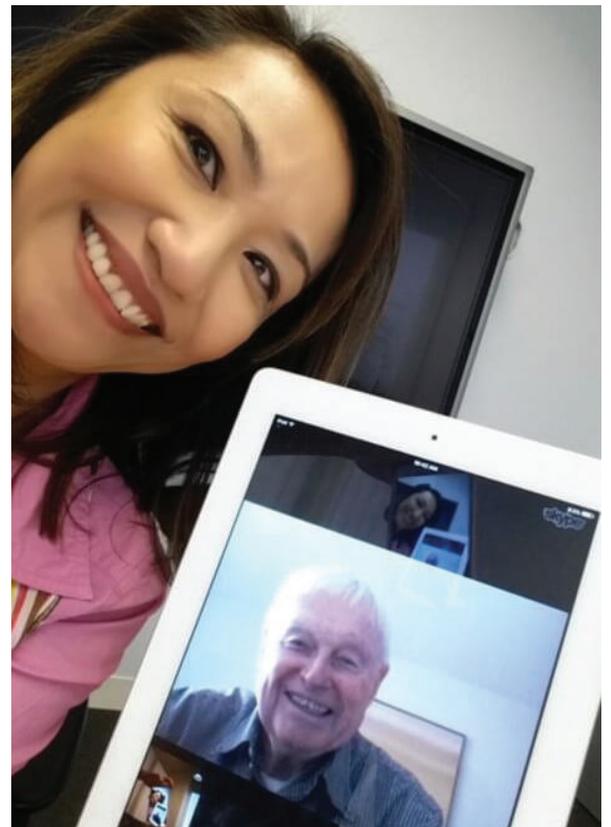
## Three Forms of Innovation

Synonyms for innovation — a change, alteration, revolution, upheaval, transformation, metamorphosis, breakthrough — hint at the three most widely discussed forms that innovation takes: incremental, radical, and disruptive.

**INCREMENTAL** innovation, the most common and routine, means simply doing or rebuilding something better.

**RADICAL** innovation, which is more challenging, involves doing something differently (e.g., putting existing ideas together in new ways).

**DISRUPTIVE** innovation is the most difficult, but tends to result in the greatest change, often through the emergence of completely new, unpredictable markets or a new technological breakthrough.



# FOUR REASONS TO INNOVATE IN SENIOR CARE

## 1. SOCIETAL DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFT

First, several societal demographic shifts occurring now mandate the need to innovate, including increased longevity and exponential growth in the aging population, significant worker shortages, changing economics resulting from new accountable - care policies, and people's overall lack of personal savings for their newfound longevity.

*"Some would say innovate or die is the call to any industry, and I would add the imperative of staying relevant to your customers' changing needs. Senior Care is no different than other industries, as we must stay close to our consumers constantly."*

- Kelly Soyland,  
Good Samaritan Society

## 3. [MISSED] OPPORTUNITY COSTS

Third, there are steep opportunity costs to businesses that fail to innovate. These include missed revenue opportunities, decreased ability to meet evolving customer interests and needs, being left behind or disrupted by new entrants, and loss of quality and efficiency relative to innovative peers. Not only can innovation reduce costs and improve consumer access to services, it can often be monetized, used to gather more consumer data, and help differentiate and build an organization's brand.

*"With this product, I feel safer and more assured that when I have to get up, I can do so independently and safely."*

- Revera Resident

*"We must disrupt ourselves before others do it for us. Leading innovation by prioritizing, funding and engaging our entire ecosystem (staff, residents and their loved ones, vendors and community partners) in our organization's ongoing transformation is a strategic imperative."*

- Kari Olson, Chief Innovation & Technology Officer, Front Porch

## 2. CHANGING CONSUMER EXPECTATIONS

Second, innovations already available to seniors today, such as on-demand services, online booking, and greater connectivity, are providing them with more choices and control, and are thus influencing their expectations—while at the same time presenting greater market opportunities for aging services. Companies such as Lyft, Honor, Airbnb, and food delivery services have recognized this opportunity and are emerging to help address all dimensions of elders' lives: health and wellness; daily living; social needs; and personal aspirations.

*"We want our mother to live in a place where we know she is being cared for, and through the technology that Avanti has brought to the table, we will connect with her in more ways than one. Technology had the strongest appeal in our family's decision of where my mom should move."*

- Daughter of Avanti resident

## 4. TRANSFORM THE AGING EXPERIENCE

Fourth, and most importantly, innovation is the path to unleashing a better aging experience for older adults. It has the power to positively impact seniors' lives by enabling independence, providing better management of health and wellness, broadening social connectedness, and much more. Innovation will enable seniors to live their lives to the fullest.

# 1.0

## LAY THE FOUNDATION TO INNOVATE

Once you've decided to jump in, how do you get started? Laying the foundation for a culture of innovation requires setting a clear intention for innovation that is tied to the organization's strategic priorities, creating an effective innovation leadership structure, and committing the necessary resources to support it.

# 1.1 SET THE INTENTION

---

Get started by deciding why your organization should innovate. Are you innovating to maintain or expand market share? To appeal to a wider audience? To improve existing services and/or launch new service lines? To increase efficiency and save money? You can begin answering these questions by doing a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis to determine what real problems could be solved—or opportunities achieved—by innovating.

Setting an intention to innovate should align innovation strategy with the overall service and business goals of the organization. This will both allow for the development of distinct areas of focus for innovation and prevent resources from being spread too thin to effect meaningful change. For example, allocating a moderate budget to support innovation in as many as ten high-profile areas (such as changing electronic medical records software, enhancing clinical training, etc.) could prevent each strategic area from being sufficiently permeated, versus budgeting those same resources for five or fewer strategic areas.

We recommend defining innovation lifecycles (e.g., two years) from goal to execution to allow for greater focus on complete implementation and evaluation before addressing other strategic areas.

# 1.2 CREATE AN EFFECTIVE INNOVATION LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE

---

An effective innovation leadership structure is essential for organizations to achieve success once the intention to innovate has been established.

In senior care, effective leadership not only supports a culture of innovation, but also drives the engagement of staff and residents, which together lead to improved quality of care and services. According to Aging2.0 provider members, innovation leadership requires a defined structure and strategy, clear roles and responsibilities, cultivation of leadership capabilities, and involvement at all levels of the organization.

*“In an industry like ours that is awakening to innovation’s power to bring about positive change, there are lots of good ideas. However, translating them into tangible results and impact can be challenging. Fragmented or siloed approaches, limited frameworks, and lack of customer focus are among the obstacles. If we want to advance a culture of innovation within our organization and industry to produce results that change lives, we must work strategically, thoughtfully, and in ways that inspire those around us to participate.”*

- Andrew Smith, Brookdale Senior Living

As seen in Aging2.0’s survey, senior care organizations place innovation leadership under the direction of various senior leadership roles: approximately thirty percent are chief information officers, seventeen percent chief innovation officers (or similar), and twelve percent chief strategy officers (or similar). The key is having a senior executive be accountable for the company’s innovation strategy.

The following leadership best practices by Mary’s Woods, Front Porch, Revera, and Genesis illustrate how organizations of various sizes and complexity can go about creating an intentional and effective innovation leadership structure. The unique but similarly robust approaches they have taken to building an innovation structure speaks to the level of priority required to advance a culture of innovation throughout an organization.



### Single-Site Continuing Care Retirement Community/Home Care Provider

When Mary's Woods set an intention around innovation and technology leadership for their community, their Information Technology resources consisted of less than one full-time person from an outside service vendor and no IT department. Seeking additional, cost-effective resources with a broad, outside perspective to help realize this new intention, they engaged with Encore.org, an organization devoted to tapping the skills and experience of those in midlife and beyond. Mary's Woods was matched with an Encore fellow with three decades of broad technology, consulting, and executive experience to define the roadmap to achieving their strategic technology objective.

The fellow began by benchmarking through a current-state assessment to create a baseline plan for moving Mary's Woods up to the industry average in terms of resources and budget, followed by research into determining the best strategic investments to build out the foundation for future leadership in technology. With a key focus on creating sustainable capacity improvement for both technology and innovation at Mary's Woods, an organizational model, staffing plan, and project roadmap covering several areas were developed and executed. At the end of the one-year fellowship, Mary's Woods decided to hire the fellow as a part-time chief technology officer to continue refining the leadership roadmap and keep the innovation efforts moving forward without losing momentum.

This approach to leadership development has enabled a rapid, sustainable, and cost-effective path forward for the organization compared to addressing it only through internal, traditional means. Tapping into a resource pool of professionals moving into encore fields after successful primary careers has provided a wealth of experience, knowledge, fresh perspective, and energy that's delivering game-changing results quickly with minimal cost.



### Multi-Site Continuing Care Retirement Community Provider

Fostering innovation leadership at all levels of the organization is critical to Front Porch's unique approach to innovation known as Front Porch Humanly Possible<sup>SM</sup>.

Front Porch believes that for innovation to be transformative, every mind, every discipline, and every level of their organization must focus on what's possible, what's achievable, and what's next. Front Porch believes innovation skills can be taught, so their executives attend a unique six-week, online, virtual, team-based, educational opportunity called the "Innovators Accelerator." All employees attend a two-hour workshop annually that helps build innovation skills and are given the opportunity to put those skills to practice through action learning projects that apply directly to their interests and responsibilities.

Through Humanly Possible<sup>SM</sup>, Front Porch has identified eight simple actions that support innovation and growth: observe, experiment, inquire, expand, collaborate, link, imagine and inspire. All team members are taught to live, lead, and teach these actions as part of the organizations ongoing commitment to fostering a culture of innovation and harnessing the energy and ideas of all their people—and encouraging them to do whatever is humanly possible to creatively meet the needs of the individuals they serve.

In addition, Front Porch executives have annual incentive compensation goals for innovation, and all employees have their innovation performance evaluated as part of their annual performance reviews. Innovation leadership is staffed at the executive level, and includes a small team of facilitators, orchestrators, incubators, and accelerators of promising ideas.



### Large Senior Living Provider

Revera Inc.'s vision is to celebrate the ageless spirit of people through service and innovation. Their strategic plan: "Grow, Innovate, Lead", propelled Revera's focus on innovation, and was supported by the creation of the role of senior vice president, Innovation & Strategic Partnerships, to oversee innovation and information technology. Revera's intention to innovate is built on four mutually reinforcing innovation pillars:

1. Innovators in Aging program to test and scale promising ventures focused on seniors
2. Employee innovation programs
3. Resident engagement programs
4. Research and strategic partnerships

These efforts, organized centrally, give Revera the unique ability to source, prioritize, collectively test, and scale ideas from a vast network of external entrepreneurs, researchers, innovation hubs, staff, and residents alike. While dedicated individuals are responsible for successful execution of innovation activities, champions within operations are pivotal in moving the innovation agenda forward.



### Large Skilled and Rehabilitation Care Provider

Genesis is acutely aware of the need for industry transformation, and believes it can help lead the way. The company started by committing to a culture of innovation at the senior management level when the role of senior director of Global Innovation was added to the leadership team. Also serving as an Innovation Fellow at Aging2.0, the role positioned Genesis Rehab Services to explore innovative solutions along all lines of business. The emerging trends of Silicon Valley and beyond are now infused into conversations among the Genesis leadership team, thus shaping the lens they use to see their strategic vision as an organization.

As their culture has evolved, Genesis has developed an innovation team that seeks out and creates innovative solutions for the emerging healthcare landscape. They test, incubate, co-create, pilot, participate in research, create multidisciplinary and intergenerational focus groups, and have made an organization-wide commitment to innovation as a culture. Seeking both a global perspective and a physical space to further advance their culture, Genesis designed and opened an Innovation Center in China, where guests can interact with some of the newest technologies created to improve healthy living and maximize independence. The Innovation Center has a smart-home design to showcase a connected living experience and demonstrate the value of these high-tech features in everyday home use. It is also home to local Chinese entrepreneurs participating in Genesis' "startup in residence" program, created to encourage engineers, entrepreneurs, and investors to accelerate the development of useful designs for healthy living as we age.

*We really believe in the power of—and are committed to—innovation. We believe that there will be a disruption in the senior and healthcare industry, and we want to be part of that."*

- Dan Hirschfeld, EVP Genesis Healthcare, President International Operations,  
Genesis Rehab Services and Respiratory Health Services

# 1.3 COMMIT RESOURCES: MONEY AND PEOPLE

Investing in innovation is a calculated risk. It requires a willingness to commit operating revenues and potentially reduce profit margins to invest in products or services that may not scale or even pass a pilot stage. However, investing resources in innovation should be viewed as central to an organization's ability to solve real problems and develop real opportunities for growth. More specifically, successful investment requires dedication of both financial and human resources.

Initial financial resources do not need to be immediately invested directly into testing innovations. Rather, they can be directed toward assessing needs, cultivating competency, and developing standardized tools/processes for advancing a culture of innovation throughout an organization. Establishing a methodology or framework for the commitment of resources allows organizations to make investments in specific areas of innovation and adjust allocation in order to best meet strategic goals.

*“Our investment in innovation has produced a real financial return. But even more inspiring has been seeing culture change before our very eyes. Innovation is changing who our company IS.”*

- Thomas Wellner, President and CEO, Revera Inc.

*“Investing in resident-use engagement technology systems has exponentially improved our ability to provide person-centered, individualized content for our residents living with dementia. Many would assume that dementia and computers don’t mix, but actually our residents with dementia were our earliest adopters of technology at Brookdale.”*

- Juliet Holt Klinger, Senior Director, Dementia Care

*It's great seeing the company invest in new technology and put the home ahead. I have never seen anything like this before.”*

- Family Member of Revera resident

A remarkable example of committing financial resources to innovation is Revera Inc., who in addition to dedicating staff resources recently committed \$20 million to invest in promising ventures focused on seniors through their “Innovators in Aging” Program.



The following best practices illustrate committing resources to innovation:



The Good Samaritan's president and COO started on a journey that involved staying close to those they desired to serve through intentionality and resources. With only a very modest budget and one part-time employee, the company began exploring the potential applications for new technology by partnering with a university lab and doing research studies at its campus. They also retained a consulting firm to conduct an assessment of their readiness for a culture of innovation by determining their strengths and weaknesses.

One major evolution in their approach to innovation was simple but profound, and came from external expertise. It was the concept of a one hundred-day innovation "experiment" on which they spent less than ten thousand dollars and a modest number of hours over the course of several weeks. The return on that investment would determine how they would pursue innovation in the future.

The experiment yielded promising organizational returns and has now grown into what Good Sam calls its "Vivo Innovation for Well-Being" program. A staff of human-centered designers and entrepreneurs collaborate to develop and bring new services to market through a series of in-market tests and interactions based on customer feedback of prototypes and business models.

At the same time, Good Sam recognizes that investment in innovation comes with uncertainty. The organization intentionally makes strategic investments with the knowledge that not all new offerings will be accepted by the marketplace.



Eskaton's focus on cultivating a culture of innovation has changed the way the organization thinks about how technology expenses are budgeted. Eskaton evaluates opportunities for alignment with its values and strategic objectives, and then determines the dollars it wishes to allocate to each project it pursues. When creating space in the budget for innovation, the company believes it is imperative to clearly stratify the investment by clarifying what is an innovation expense versus an operational

expense. Their most recent innovative projects have fallen into one of the following four categories: 1) innovation expense, 2) capitalized expense, 3) operational expense, and 4) partner-sponsored.

Short-term, rapid pilots such as evaluating the efficacy of a smart sensor tool, developing a product aimed at preventing injury, or enhancing quality of life (e.g., music), and social communication initially fall under "innovation expense." Once the pilot completes a thorough evaluation, Eskaton makes a "go/no go" determination with regard to scaling the tool or system. When it's a "go," innovations are scaled through a combination of capital and operational dollars (covering ongoing maintenance and subscription costs).

Involving senior residents in the evaluation of a product or tool designed to enhance their lives is a must, according to Eskaton. In some cases, Eskaton will partner with a new startup company that's developing a tool or product and will sponsor the research and evaluation, thus providing the products and design for feedback at no cost.

Regardless of where the funding for new ideas comes from, Eskaton has found that investment in human capital (e.g., workforce and resident buy-in) is of equal importance to financial investment solely for the sake of return on investment (ROI) in innovation and technology. Without it, it is much more difficult to make the work flow process changes needed to ensure success.

# 2.0

## DEVELOP AN INNOVATION FRAMEWORK

After laying the foundation to innovate, the next step is developing a framework or plan that allows for internally and externally generated innovations to be assessed and ranked based on their ability to help achieve your organization's strategy and innovation priorities.

## 2.0 DEVELOP AN INNOVATION FRAMEWORK

The scope of an innovation framework should relate specifically to your organization's approach to some or all of the three forms of innovation (incremental, radical, and disruptive) discussed in the introduction. Avanti Senior Living's best practice below demonstrates this approach.

The framework should also contain the methods and processes you wish to use to innovate as well as a strategy for engaging your key communities: clients and families, front line staff, external partners, and the greater community (see Section 4). Doing so not only provides a roadmap for the individuals facilitating innovation within your organization, but also allows for effective communication with internal and external stakeholders to help you determine what is needed to reach strategic goals and help mobilize your innovation initiatives. The Brookdale Senior Living best practice on the next page illustrates how to structure an innovation framework.



Avanti Senior Living takes an open approach to innovation. They look at big innovations (radical and disruptive), as well as one-step improvements (incremental) and prioritize products and services they know will have a long lifespan and will not quickly become outdated. Avanti seeks innovations with an explicit purpose that goes beyond simply creating a cool gadget, with clear value for the operator, residents, and their care—as well as for families and their connectivity with loved ones.

However, recognizing that every community is different, Avanti does not limit its innovation horizon to pre-determined initiatives, and is always open to a novel pitch. They believe that because senior care is such a diverse business with various areas of specialty under one roof, having innovation flowing in from all areas allows them to have a proportionate all-encompassing view of how innovation can help them meet their goals and provide innovative care.





Brookdale Senior Living believes innovation is crucial to its mission to enrich lives because the world is changing so rapidly. As their seniors' needs grow, so do the potential tools and technologies available to help meet those requirements. This challenge can be overwhelming. There is a saying at Brookdale headquarters that if opportunity were a food, they would not be at risk of starving, they would be at risk of choking. But with a clearly defined framework and disciplined approach, the company believes it can create a culture of innovation that not only moves their business forward, but transforms the lives of those they serve. This framework involves three processes: carefully bringing in and evaluating opportunities; defining and testing solutions; and amplifying those solutions to work efficiently across their large senior living organization.

1) Intake & Evaluation is divided into internal and external:

- Internal strategies are undertaken to engage local communities and corporate departments in producing innovation. Interviews and focus groups are held with associates at the community level to observe local operations and discuss ideas with staff in the field who are developing new ideas and approaches. At the corporate level, traditional communications are augmented with updates about innovation projects through hands-on demonstrations.
- External ideas are collected from many sources, such such as academic research studies, startups or existing technology partners. A marquee initiative from which external innovations are sourced is the "Entrepreneur in Senior Residence" program, in which startup entrepreneurs live in a senior living community for a week or more in order to both better understand life as an older adult and obtain residents' recommendations for products and services. The organization also finds technology partners and collaborates with provider peers to develop innovative solutions through the Aging2.0 Alliance.

2) Defining and Testing Solutions: Once an opportunity is identified, it is further defined and tested using a structured process to ensure success. Drawing inspiration from the concepts of human-centered design, residents, families, and staff are engaged to help ensure potential solutions address real needs in a new way, utilizing tools and templates to ensure a consistent and customer-centric approach.

3) Amplification and Scale: When a solution proves sufficiently valuable (see Section 4.1, Measure Outcomes and Tell the Story), efforts begin to extend it across the organization and tie it in with existing operations. Doing so requires a structured scaling plan and process as part of the innovation framework (Section 4.2).



---

In order to help ensure the success of innovation deployments, a framework should be created to address the realities of implementation and coordination within a provider’s operational model. This includes reconciling and integrating contractual and regulatory responsibilities in relation to older adults and families. If these matters are not addressed in advance, certain kinds of innovations—particularly those that depend on a technology device—can obscure the provider’s role and responsibilities to the older adult (e.g., monitoring, care giving, record keeping, and providing security systems).

## AGREEMENTS AND CONSENTS

Before embarking on a pilot or scaled deployment, to reduce the risk of misunderstandings and miscommunications that could adversely affect quality and increase liability, appropriate agreements and consents should be put in place. These include:

- **Accountability Agreement.** An accountability agreement between an external innovation partner, such as a technology company, and the care/service provider should cover communication protocols, reporting of client conditions, and monitoring of the effectiveness of the tech devices or service. It may also provide clarification of the duties of the care provider under contract with the resident, or pursuant to regulation, that cannot be delegated to the tech company or its service. It should cover the allocation of responsibility or liability in the event of accident or injury, and include clauses governing the assumption of risk, waiver of liability, and indemnity agreements between the operator, tech provider, and (especially for pilot testing) the older adult.
- **Client Disclosures and Consents.** Client disclosures and consents are also important issues to discuss and document before new innovations are implemented. Considerations include clients’ confidential information potentially being compromised, or clients not fully appreciating or agreeing with participation and its potential consequences. The parties should consider a client participation/opt-out agreement that contains a written disclosure to residents of the benefits of using the tech device or service, any limitations or disclaimers about their effectiveness, a written consent of the resident to participate in the program, and a disclosure of the benefits they may be foregoing if they choose not to participate.
- **Pilot Agreement.** A beta testing or pilot agreement should touch on the issues discussed above and outline the primary elements of an innovation pilot project, including overall goals and impact expectations for the pilot; scope, duration, number of participants, and target profile; roles and responsibilities of both parties during the pilot; plans for the measurement of effectiveness for possible scale; and ownership of the technology (if applicable).

Aging2.0 provides a Pilot Process Guide, Partnership Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) Template, and participant consent templates to members of the Aging2.0 Alliance ([aging2.com/alliance](http://aging2.com/alliance)).

# 3.0

## ENGAGE YOUR COMMUNITY

By engaging with communities, organizations can understand what areas of care or operations would benefit from innovation and why. Any innovation framework should include strategies for engaging frontline staff, older adults, and families, in addition to external stakeholders and the greater community.

# 3.1 CLIENTS AND FAMILIES

Organizations focused on providing high-quality senior care should engage older adults as field experts on the consumer experience, as doing so leads to designing, vetting, and implementing innovative products and services that are both needed and valued by clients. Designing with, not for, older adults through “design thinking” methods such as empathy mapping and inclusive design teams result in products and services that are more likely to optimize consumers’ experiences and quality of life.

*“Investing in developing a culture of adaptability, curiosity, and innovation provides teams of staff and older adults a voice at the table to plan and design the future.”*

- Sheri Peifer, Chief Strategy Officer, Eskaton

Innovation Processes	Use
Customer Satisfaction Surveys	33%
External innovation collaborations and partnerships	24%
Centralized innovation initiatives at headquarters	21%
Pilot projects/trials	21%
Formalized accountability to company leadership	15%
Integration of consumer insights into product service/design	13%
Innovation/technology committee	11%
Innovation consultants	9%
Entrepreneurs in residence	7%
Older adult/client “tech explorer” groups	7%

Table 1

However, Aging2.0’s survey revealed that the processes least commonly used by senior care organizations are those that require the greatest degree of front line staff and consumer engagement (Table 1).

There are several ways to engage older adults. Surveys and interviews allow clients to provide insights about their experience and care. “Entrepreneurs in Residence” programs initiated by Brookdale (and others) facilitate direct interaction (ranging from one day to one year) between innovators and older adults, staff and the living/work environment. “Tech Explorer” groups such as those organized by Eskaton allow older adults the opportunity to get on the front line of innovation by proposing and testing ideas, as well as serving as deployment champions for innovations previously adopted.

Existing consumer committees are an often underutilized resource for innovation engagement. In senior living for example, making discussion of opportunities for

innovation a regular part of resident council meetings can provide important feedback on whether certain products / services should be piloted or scaled.

Moreover, as today’s researchers, product developers, and investors respond to the world’s changing demographics, there is unprecedented interest in older consumers. Designers and entrepreneurs are increasingly seeking opportunities for meaningful engagement with thoughtful, articulate older adults who can test and provide feedback about their ideas and products before they’re brought to market. The following best practice by Avenidas illustrates how to create a robust older adult engagement strategy as part of a framework for innovation.

*“Longevity Explorers has been a treat for me. Like test-marketing a computerized inflatable waist belt to protect the hips from fracture if one falls, or sharing ideas for ways technology could be helpful for seniors. What could be more fun or interesting?”*

- Karen, age 78, Eskaton resident



Through a new program called the “Generations Lab,” the forty-seven-year-old nonprofit organization Avenidas and its clients are now poised to fully participate in the rapidly expanding field of aging innovation and entrepreneurship.

The Generations Lab aims to pioneer a new approach to reducing the digital divide between younger and older people. The Lab will go beyond the computer training that Avenidas pioneered over twenty-five years ago by introducing older adults in Silicon Valley to the wide range of newer digital technologies—smart phones, tablets, wearables, e-readers, even 3D printers and robots—that could help them live healthier, richer, more independent lives. It is intentionally designed to enable seniors to explore new technologies through talks and demos to increase awareness of new options; engage with tech through workshops and one-on-one training to acquire new skills; and help shape new products by participating in focus groups or pilot testing.

By the end of its first year, the Generations Lab will have involved at least five hundred older adults in classes, workshops, tech talks, demos, conferences, and research projects that introduce them to new technologies and their uses. They also anticipate working with at least twenty companies and entrepreneurs to provide input into their product development process through interviews, focus groups, and pilot testing. Progress will be measured by the number of participants attracted to the Lab’s programs, a survey of Lab participants that measures their level of knowledge of and comfort with technology before and after participating in Lab activities, and the level of involvement displayed by the rest of the industry in the Lab and the impact of that involvement with new product development.

The Generations Lab's growth potential seems infinite. By working together, entrepreneurs, innovators, and older adults are in an unprecedented position to transform and reinvent aging.

*"I attended a tech fair that the Avenidas Generations Lab hosted, and was surprised at how much fun I had interacting with robots, using a 3-D printer, and checking out other new technologies. Trying out different gadgets in a relaxed setting with other older adults helped me feel more comfortable. Now I've decided to get some one-on-one tutoring from Avenidas so I can get more out of my smart phone."*

- Chris, age 71



## 3.2 FRONTLINE EXPERTS

Effective senior care delivery is a coordinated collaboration between various front-line disciplines, including nursing care, rehabilitation, recreation, personal support, housekeeping, nutrition/food services, environmental/facilities management, and many others. Therefore, development of ideas for innovation in these areas should include front line experts.

*"This solution is going to be easier for staff, and much more convenient. I just can't imagine going back to paper."*

- Revera staff member

Companies may also create a designated "safe space" location separate from employees' everyday work environment where they can meet to discuss particular topics and share experiences and potential solutions in a consequence-free environment. This strategy recognizes that innovation ideas may come from all corners of the organization.

Other approaches include offering incentive funds to innovative employees. For example, the amount of funds given to employees in bonuses or for professional development may take into account the degree to which they are oriented toward innovation as evidenced by the number of solutions they suggest to the organization.

Engaging employees over larger senior care organizations with numerous service lines and/or sites can be challenging. The following best practice by Revera Inc. illustrates how to create standardized employee innovation engagement initiatives across an entire organization as part of an innovation framework.

*Keep in mind that success isn't just about having the latest and greatest technology. Tech is only ten percent of it. The tech part is really the easiest. We can always fix those things—the real work is in engagement and adoption."*

- Davis Park, Director, Front Porch Center on Innovation and Wellbeing

Engagement of front line staff to help propel innovation can occur in a variety of ways. One strategy is embedding innovation concepts and process into customary staff training. For example, Procter and Gamble actively teaches all of its employees how to write problem statements and articulate ideas for solutions. Another strategy, as practiced by Eskaton, is involving staff intimately in using innovations under consideration before they are deployed ("wear it, see it, feel it."). Eskaton has found that staff believe residents will benefit from a product based on their own firsthand experience, they are much more likely to be invested in the success of the project. The Good Samaritan Society has deployed an "idea incubator" forum to encourage employees to test new ideas that are not yet fully baked.

*With these tools I have more time for genuine interaction."*

- Front Porch staff member



Revera has built a number of employee innovation programs that help the company obtain, test, and scale ideas from staff and build a culture and internal capacity for innovation. Its annual “Revera Innovation Challenge” enables employees to develop, share, test, and implement innovative ideas. Finalists are chosen through an engaging Shark Tank-style event and supported by their innovation office to test their ideas through pilots at Revera communities. Gold, silver, and bronze “iPrizes” are awarded to the most scalable and impactful pilots.

In the first year of the program, Revera experienced eighty percent community participation, with eighty percent of participating sites engaging at least twenty-five percent of staff and at least one resident and family in developing ideas. The top ten finalists pilot their solutions in partnership with existing and new vendors. The focus of these pilots ranges from more efficient ways of communicating with families to dining-management applications, fall-prevention solutions, and innovative ways of serving residents on a texture-modified diet. Because the pilots are developed by front line staff with hands-on experience, they have a high potential for scale and overall impact.

Revera also launched “iWeek,” which focuses on providing an array of tools and exercises for staff to unleash their creative potential. These include individual and group exercises ranging from recess to demo days, jam sessions, and art shows.

Revera’s employee innovation programs have built excitement and engagement around innovation from the front line to the boardroom. Front line staff are excited for next year’s iPrize, and senior leadership has been impressed and very supportive of staff’s innovation initiatives.



## 3.3 EXTERNAL PARTNERS AND THE GREATER COMMUNITY

Innovation in senior care must not only happen within the organization but extend to the greater community. This involves working with community stakeholders such as healthcare and corporate partners, local governments and regulatory and legislative bodies, as well as with entrepreneurs, startups and existing technology vendors. Providers should also collaborate with innovative peers through groups focused on innovation such as the Aging2.0 Alliance. Doing so will not only proactively address common pain points, but will also support the scaling of innovations.

In fact, Aging2.0's survey revealed that many senior care organizations choose to work with entrepreneurs or startup companies in order to introduce innovative products or services. Ninety percent of respondent organizations indicated having worked or wishing to work with startup companies.

Another rich source of innovative ideas and pilot initiatives is universities and research institutions focused on topics of interest to senior care providers. Partnering with these research organizations not only gives providers early access to leading-edge technologies and services, but in-turn gives the researchers real-life data with which to improve their focus—data that can be difficult to find from a project bound within the walls of academia. One example of this is the ongoing partnership between Mary's Woods and Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU), the largest medical research institution in the state.

MARY'S  
WOODS

Mary's Woods has partnered with OHSU multiple times over the course of several years. For example, they conducted research on the positive effects of art and music instruction in managing mild dementia and other cognitive issues in the senior population. The most recent collaboration was in the development of a next-generation motion detection and analysis solution for seniors living alone. They used new approaches designed to eliminate “blind spots” in existing systems as well as add an audio channel for even more detail and relevance in the intelligence of the system. An interesting added benefit for both parties in this arrangement is that the OHSU grant funding allowed the researchers to develop a go-to-market product in parallel with the research. By partnering with Mary's Woods for pilots and trials during the research and development process, OHSU and developers get focused, relevant data to shape a more meaningful product for the senior market at large, while the Mary's Woods residents get access to cutting-edge safety technology at a fraction of the cost of a traditional purchase/rollout.

*“Today, as researchers, product developers, and investors respond to the world’s changing demographics, there is unprecedented interest in older consumers who can test and provide feedback about ideas and products before they are brought to market. Senior care organizations are in a unique position to facilitate the engagement of these two groups and, in doing so, help accelerate innovations that will improve the quality of all of our lives.”*

- Amy Andonian, CEO, Avenidas



The following best practice by Front Porch demonstrates how to effectively engage external stakeholders and the broader community.



CENTER FOR INNOVATION  
AND WELLBEING

The Front Porch Center for Innovation & Wellbeing weaves innovative and empowering technology into the lives of the individuals they serve by supporting their well-being and helping them thrive. The Center is a signature program of Humanly Possible<sup>SM</sup>, Front Porch's commitment to doing everything humanly possible to creatively meet the evolving needs of those they serve (featured in Section 1.2)

The center works closely with staff, residents and their loved ones to identify needs and evaluate opportunities to pilot and scale promising technology solutions to help older adults. This work is further strengthened by collaborations with a vast network of external partners. The FPCIW network includes entrepreneurs and tech companies, local government entities, healthcare partners, peer senior living and community based organizations, students and researchers at universities including USC, UCSF, UCI, UC Davis, University of Pacific, and others.

As part of building these collaborations, the center's team has followed a straightforward approach to building successful relationships:

- First, allow time to really get to know your partners and ensure that you are compatible in how you see the work objectives, and that you and see the benefits of collaboration in the same way.
- Second, make sure those commitments are clear and that there is organizational buy-in for the partnership at every level.
- Third, create formal plans and processes upfront before you start working together, including a process to identify and resolve problems.



# 4.0

## MOVE BEYOND BETA

Innovation without the objective of deployment and scale is just an exercise, albeit an inherently useful one. Scale cannot easily be achieved without first effectively measuring outcomes, documenting impacts, and navigating the regulatory and legal context in which they are to be deployed.

# 4.1 MEASURE SUCCESS & TELL THE STORY

Measurement can be an important and powerful process involving simple steps that ultimately not only guide decisions about deployment and scale, but also help organizations learn from their experiences and become more proficient at innovation. Documenting impact is essential for winning the support of internal and external stakeholders in efforts to deploy and scale innovations, in addition to securing additional partners and, in some cases, funding.

## Measuring Outcomes

Establishing specific measurement metrics is key to charting progress and making course corrections and decisions with regard to discontinuing or pursuing deployment. This set of analytical metrics allows your innovation team to effectively measure and evaluate the efficacy and quality of incoming innovations against a standardized set of criteria, while also determining whether your internal innovation strategy is bearing fruit.

Regardless of your organization’s size, or where you are in your innovation journey, begin by defining measures that reflect what is most important and compelling to your organization’s particular needs and challenges. First and foremost, be clear about the problem you are trying to solve, and then identify the metrics in your organization that will reflect the innovation’s impact on that problem. As part of this, listen to the skeptics within your organization—those with the biggest concerns—and then develop metrics to track how the innovation performs in those domains. Use your knowledge of your organization as your guide in determining what you measure and how you measure it.

The following best practice by Baycrest’s Canadian Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation illustrates an effective approach for measuring outcomes.

## Baycrest

Baycrest Health Sciences’ Canadian Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation (CC-ABHI) uses the analogy of a leaky pipeline—unlike a solid pipe where a product enters at one end and exits at the other without any additions to the process, the leaky pipeline takes these refinements and changes into consideration—to create a framework for accepting and determining further investment in innovative products and services.

CC-ABHI understands innovations not only come into an innovation ecosystem at different stages, but also require unique outputs depending on the specific stage of innovation. They use these outputs to objectively measure innovations throughout the process and determine whether outcomes meet the strategic goals CC-ABHI is hoping to facilitate through innovation. This not only allows for innovations to be filtered in and out, but also facilitates the necessary collaboration between innovators to refine a product until it can be scaled and broadly adopted by users.

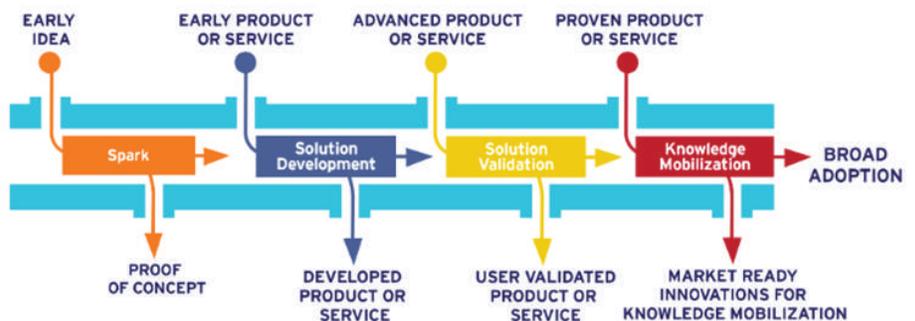


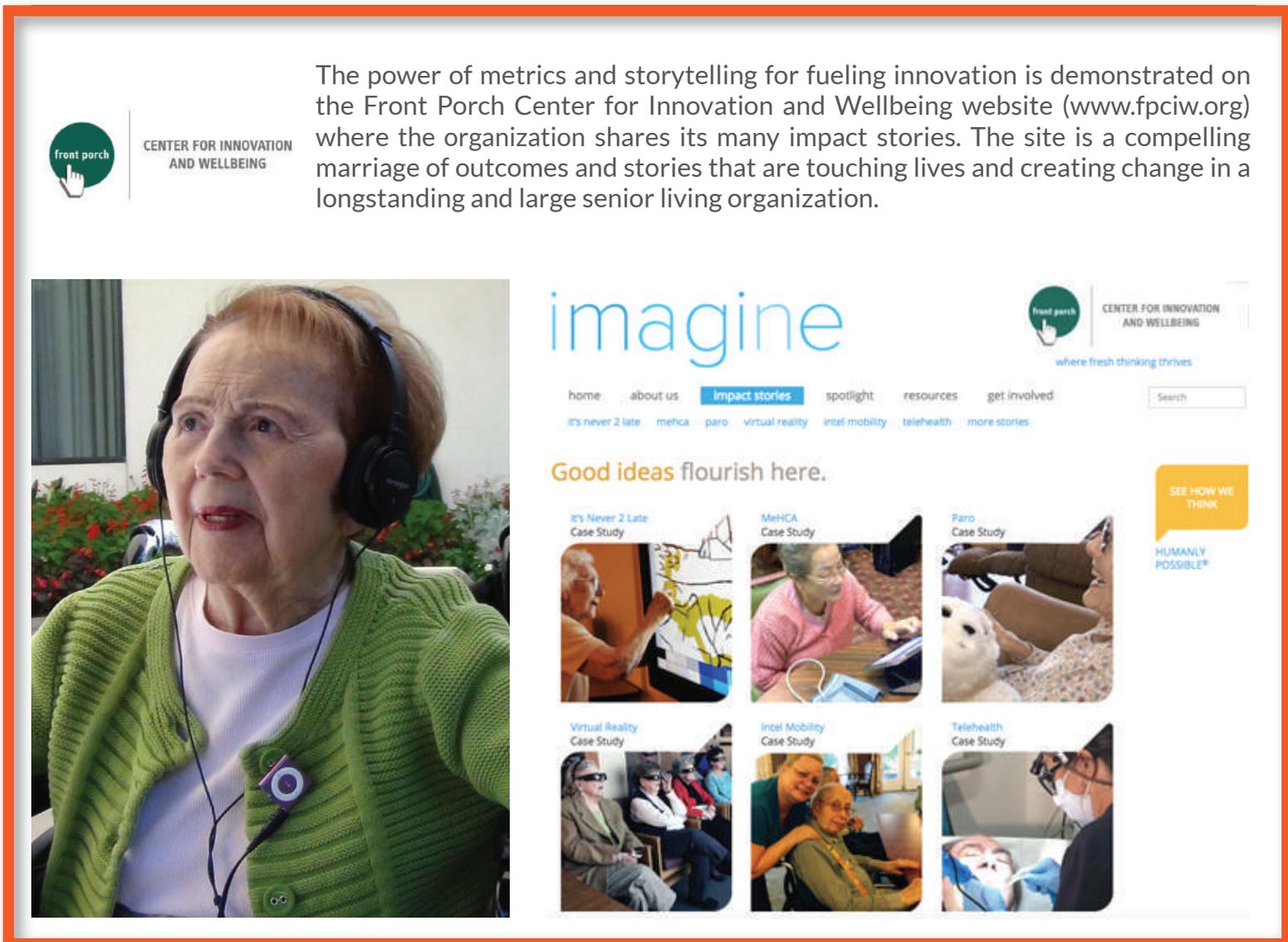
Figure 1: CC-ABHI “Leaky Pipeline”

## Documenting Impact: “Tell the Story!”

One of the most compelling ways to convey innovation success and influence change in organizations is through storytelling. While quantitative metrics are invariably required, qualitative, mission-centric stories can serve to inspire people and build advocacy for expansion even before the quantitative metrics are finalized. This may be especially important when an organization is mission-centric, as is often the case in senior care.

Plan ahead to capture the full story of your innovation from the very beginning of your innovation pilot. Tell the story of the challenge you are trying to address, the innovation, and its impact. Remember that the impact is where your metrics and your personal story come together into one compelling case study. Once you have put that story together, don't be shy, share it far and wide both within and outside your organization. Impact stories create and support culture change and are a very powerful tool that can fuel your innovation engine for success.

The following best practice by Front Porch's Center for Innovation & Wellbeing illustrates how to effectively document impact.



The power of metrics and storytelling for fueling innovation is demonstrated on the Front Porch Center for Innovation and Wellbeing website ([www.fpciwi.org](http://www.fpciwi.org)) where the organization shares its many impact stories. The site is a compelling marriage of outcomes and stories that are touching lives and creating change in a longstanding and large senior living organization.

## 4.2 SCALE

---

Once key business-model hypotheses have been validated, often through a proof of concept or pilot test, and outcome measures and organizational impact interests have been satisfied, scaling becomes a viable option. However, this is only the beginning of a new and complex phase of innovation that often requires revision of existing operations, alignment with procurement processes, integration with existing IT infrastructure, and additional training of staff.

While the topic of scaling innovations alone could warrant an entire white paper, below are three key elements to consider:

1. Plan ahead for scale, even before initiating a pilot.
2. Prepare for scale during the pilot.
3. Acknowledge that scaling requires different capabilities than piloting.

### Plan Ahead for Scale, Before Initiating a Pilot

Why initiate an innovation pilot if you know for a fact that even if the hypotheses are verified, the organization is incapable of or unwilling to scale it? Or its impact on the organization may not be great enough to justify the investment to move forward? The answer is, you shouldn't. This is why you must consider scaling requirements even while planning for a pilot. Always confirm that expected outcomes will justify expansion before beginning.

There may be deal-breakers to expansion like prohibitive infrastructure expenses, legal risks (discussed in Section 2.0), or stronger competing organizational priorities. For example, piloting innovations often requires the intentional use of a MVP (minimally viable product) as a work-around to enable a hypothesis to be tested quickly. These workarounds must be addressed once the innovation is ready to scale. If the issues or systems the MVP bypasses are intractable, then there may be no point in testing in the first place. Even if the issues can be addressed and the organization is willing to spend the resources to do so, expectations around timing of expansion must take this extra effort into account.

### QUESTIONS TO ANSWER BEFORE SCALING:

1. Who is the operations lead tasked with championing scaling for this pilot?
2. What is the budget cycle, both for capital and operating dollars, to ensure pilots have resources for scaling?
3. What is the time horizon for measuring return on investment?
4. Will scaling be done across all sites, or on a proof of concept basis to smaller groups of sites?
5. What best practices, new protocols, and/or processes were identified during the pilot that also need to be scaled?
6. Are there other internal processes, such as project management prioritization or resource allocation decisions that need to be made prior to scaling?
7. How does the pilot being scaled integrate with existing programs?
8. How are related departments such as procurement, legal, and information technology involved in scaling?
9. How will we measure the impact and benefits of scaling?

---

## Prepare for Scale During the Pilot

While in the middle of a pilot, it is easy to get caught up in the fun of creatively managing challenges, the hard work of measuring impact, and the joys of seeing the innovation living “out in the wild.” However, it is important to always keep an eye toward scaling to ensure you capture requirements for scale so you can quickly act once the pilot is complete. For example, keep a running list of scaling requirements—or even better, update the list you made before you started the pilot. Requirements may include IT integration, challenges to communication and training that staff turn over may present, unforeseen costs, operational nuances, etc.

Successful innovators will continue to socialize the concept of the innovation even during the pilot so future critical stakeholders are aware it’s happening and continue to support it. As discussed above, this involves collecting the stories, photos, and videos that will be critical to selling expansion in the next phase.

## Scaling Requires Different Capabilities Than Piloting

A lot of work goes into scaling an innovation. By definition, scaling means many more stakeholders must be engaged. Don’t assume everyone in the organization is supportive of expansion. Detractors will emerge. More detailed questions will emerge. Even after proving hypotheses, the expansion must compete against other initiatives that are themselves seeking expansion and implementation. This means the innovator must treat the organization like a new partner to whom a proven product is trying to be sold. Much of this risk can be mitigated during the pilot through good planning and socialization of findings—although scaling an innovation is held to a much higher standard than piloting an innovation.

Once approval for scale is acquired, there is a lot to plan. How can processes be automated? What happens when staff turns over? How is data integrated into ongoing reporting? Scaling is not the end of an innovation cycle, but rather the beginning of a new cycle with parallel work streams.

## FOUR PARALLEL WORK STREAMS FOR SCALING

- **Invigorate your base.** While planning to scale, don’t forget about the pilot locations and the organizational stakeholders deeply engaged in the pilot. The continued success of the pilot locations should be the priority as waning enthusiasm in or impact to those locations will cause the organization to question the rationale for scaling the innovation in the first place. If it’s not sustainable, then why expand it? Waning enthusiasm is an early warning sign of incomplete integration.
- **Institutionalize and integrate.** Staff turnover regularly, yet organizational processes remain relatively stable. How? These processes are integrated into many parts of the organization: training, ongoing communications, reporting, job descriptions, sales and marketing messaging, technology systems, etc. Most of these areas are intentionally ignored during the pilot phase in order to quickly test a MVP, but eventually become the very focus of expansion planning and execution. When planning to scale, do not underestimate the time, labor, and cost of these items.
- **Implement in new settings.** Another critical area of scaling is strong implementation, a component that’s often overlooked in resource planning. Depending on the speed and complexity of an implementation, additional labor may be required to prepare communications, conduct training, complete physical installations, etc. Completing this work efficiently and effectively requires strong planning, clear communications and expectations, and consistently high-quality execution.
- **Continue to iterate.** Finally, remember that innovation does not stop once an idea is scaled. The team should continue to find ways to iterate and improve. Even if this means small, incremental changes, the innovation process still applies. Hypotheses need to be formed. MVPs need to be built, tested, and evaluated. Depending on the organizational structure, different departments may be responsible for this work. But the innovation can’t stop after one win, as even greater innovations become possible.

# CONCLUSION

We hope you will take these insights and recommendations to advance a culture of innovation in your organization. It will require tenacity, friends, and failure, but is one of the most rewarding and important things senior care organizations must do to ensure both the highest quality of life possible for older adults and organizational vitality. It is a journey with twists and turns, coming from a place of “yes,” with openness to learning all the time.

Once you’ve laid the foundation for innovation as described above, don’t wait for a “silver bullet” or perfect innovation idea to come along. Jump in by creating a framework for innovation in your organization. Keep it manageable, start small but plan for scale from the beginning, and be sure to collaborate with innovative peers and partners. Take it seriously, but have fun!

Many thanks to the Aging2.0 Alliance members noted below who contributed their experiences, insights, and recommendations to this white paper and its goal of advancing the field of senior care. They are leaders others should emulate.

Aging2.0 makes innovation design and piloting resources available to members of the Aging2.0 Alliance, Aging2.0's corporate innovation community. It is a community of leading innovators with which to connect, share knowledge, and find partners, including senior and health care providers, technology companies, industry partners and other leading innovators. Members receive exclusive access, insights and brand elevation.

Visit [aging2.com/alliance](https://aging2.com/alliance) for more information. We invite you to join us!

---

Aging2.0 Alliance Member Organizations Contributing Content:



**Avanti Senior Living:** Located in Texas and Louisiana, Avanti Senior Living believes in making our communities a place where seniors begin living. There fresh, purposely built communities are designed and created by seniors, for seniors.



**Avenidas:** Avenidas is a community-based nonprofit organization that provides support, information, and community to enrich the lives of older adults and their families on the Mid-Peninsula and San Francisco Bay-Area communities.



**Baycrest / Canadian Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation:** Baycrest Health Sciences is a leader in geriatric residential living, care, research, innovation, and education, and home to the Canadian Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation (CC-ABHI).



**Brookdale:** Based outside of Nashville, Tennessee, Brookdale Senior Living operates independent living, assisted living, and dementia-care communities and continuing - care retirement centers across the United States.



**Eskaton:** Eskaton is a nonprofit based in the Sacramento, California area that has been innovating and adapting to the needs of older adults for over four decades, offering a full spectrum of home and campus-based services.



**Evangelical Lutheran Good Samaritan Society:** The Good Samaritan Society is the largest not-for-profit provider of senior care and services in the U.S., and is committed to transforming the aging experience through innovation and collaboration.



**Front Porch:** Headquartered in Glendale, California, Front Porch is a family of companies dedicated to responding to the changing needs of the aging community. Their mission is to meet needs rather than simply provide services.



**Genesis Healthcare:** Headquartered in Pennsylvania, Genesis is the largest provider of physical therapy, occupational therapy, skilled nursing, and other wellness services for the older adult population, employing nearly ninety thousand people with seventeen hundred locations in forty-five states.



**Hanson Bridgett:** Hanson Bridgett provides legal services and business advice to senior care providers and technology companies focused on senior care.



**Mary's Woods:** Mary's Woods at Marylhurst Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC), located in the Northwest, is a thriving community of elder artists, writers, educators, and professionals from around the nation.



**Revera:** Revera Inc., Headquartered outside of Toronto, Canada, is a leading provider of senior accommodation, care and services. It owns or operates more than five hundred properties across Canada, the U.S. and the United Kingdom. Revera is built on a fifty-year history of helping seniors live life to the fullest.

## ABOUT AGING<sup>2.0</sup>

---

Aging2.0 is a global innovation platform which supports innovators taking on the biggest challenges and opportunities in aging by building community, convening events and driving collaboration. Over the past four years, Aging2.0 has hosted more than 300 events around the world, cultivating a robust ecosystem of entrepreneurs, technologists, designers, investors, senior care providers and older adults themselves. For more information, please visit [aging2.com](http://aging2.com).