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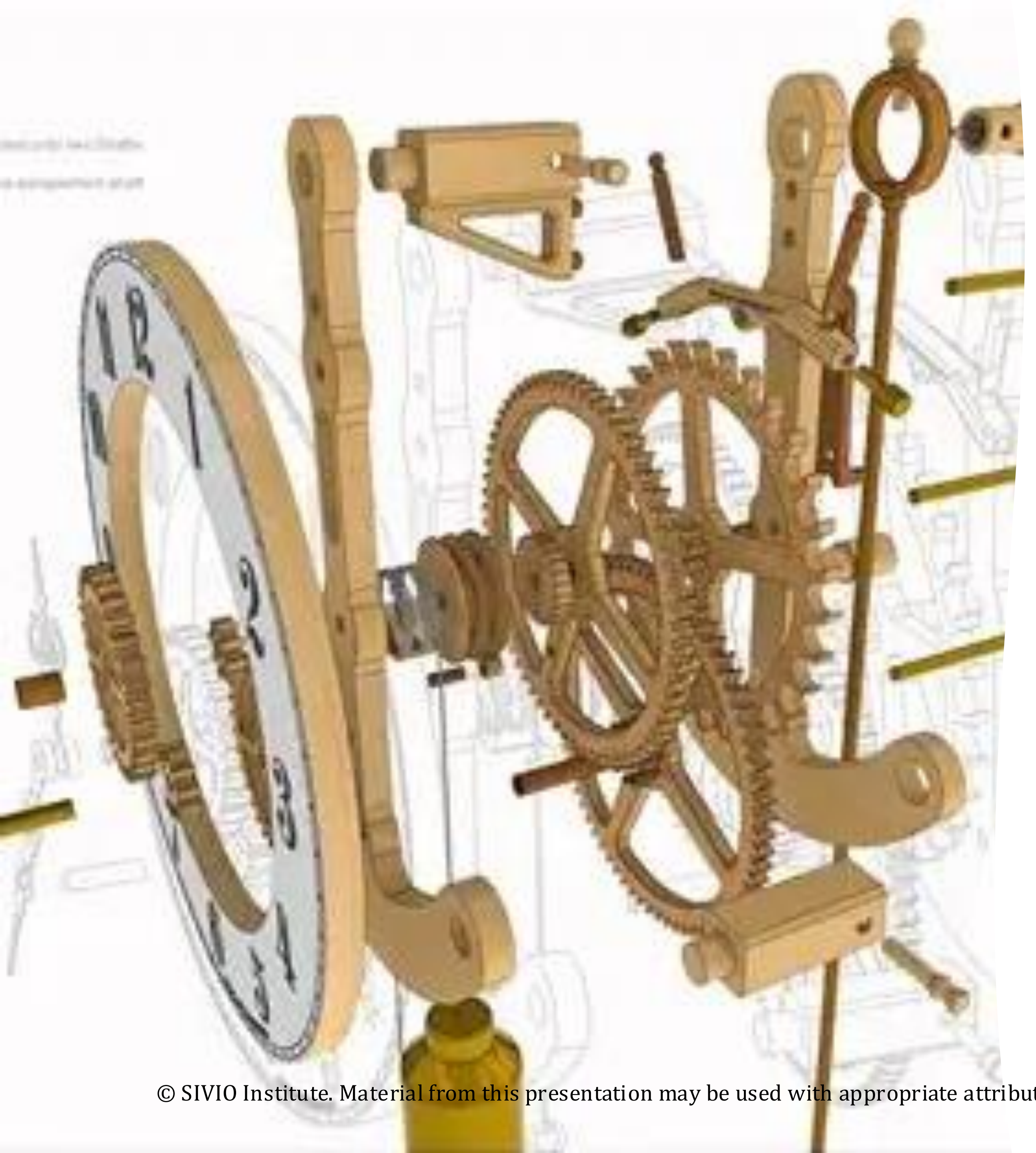
SIVIO
INSTITUTE
DO WE HAVE
MODELS OF SUSTAINABILITY ?

Time Telling	VS	Clock Building
Having a great idea or charismatic vision for a moment in time. **Time-Telling Priorities** • Analysing global/African, Regional and • National trends to respond • **PROGRAM strategy** • Vision, charisma, and “great ideas” drive momentum — but only for a season.		Building an organisation that endures beyond any leader or single product. **Clock Building Priorities** • **Management development** — strengthening leadership capacity. • **Organisation design** — creating systems, structures, and processes that scale. • **Architectural mindset** — building organisational traits that produce visionary companies. • **Primary output:** the **company itself** — its identity, principles, and long-term capability.

We need mission-oriented research and proper targets. We need to find an aim, a very real and clear target and then establish the necessary task forces to get the job done.



Clock Building

- Clock builders concentrate primarily on building an organisation- **building a ticking clock rather than on hitting a grant or a project just right with a visionary product.**
- They take an architectural approach and concentrate on building the organisational traits of visionary organisations.
- The primary output of their efforts is not the tangible implementation of a great idea, the expression of a charismatic personality, the gratification of their ego, or the accumulation of personal wealth. ***Their greatest creation is the organisation itself and what it stands for***
- It is time to shift from seeing the organisation as a vehicle for the program to seeing the program as a vehicle for the organisation

The How's of Change

Mission-Oriented Change

- Establish **clear, real targets**.
- Build **task forces** aligned to those targets.
- Accept that some leaps require **faith** — believing key things are doable before they are provable.

The Genius of the AND

- Great organisations reject the tyranny of **either/or**.
- They embrace **A AND B** — discipline AND creativity, stability AND change, tradition AND innovation.

Principled Adaptation

- To meet a changing world, an organisation must be ready to **change everything except its basic beliefs**.
- The **only sacred cow** should be the organisation's core philosophy of doing business.

What Does Clock Building Look Like?

- Identify the tools of how we work.

KNOWLEDGE GENERATION & RESEARCH

DIALOGUES & CONVENINGS

TRAINING / CAPACITY BUILDING

COMMUNICATION

NETWORKING / COLLABORATION

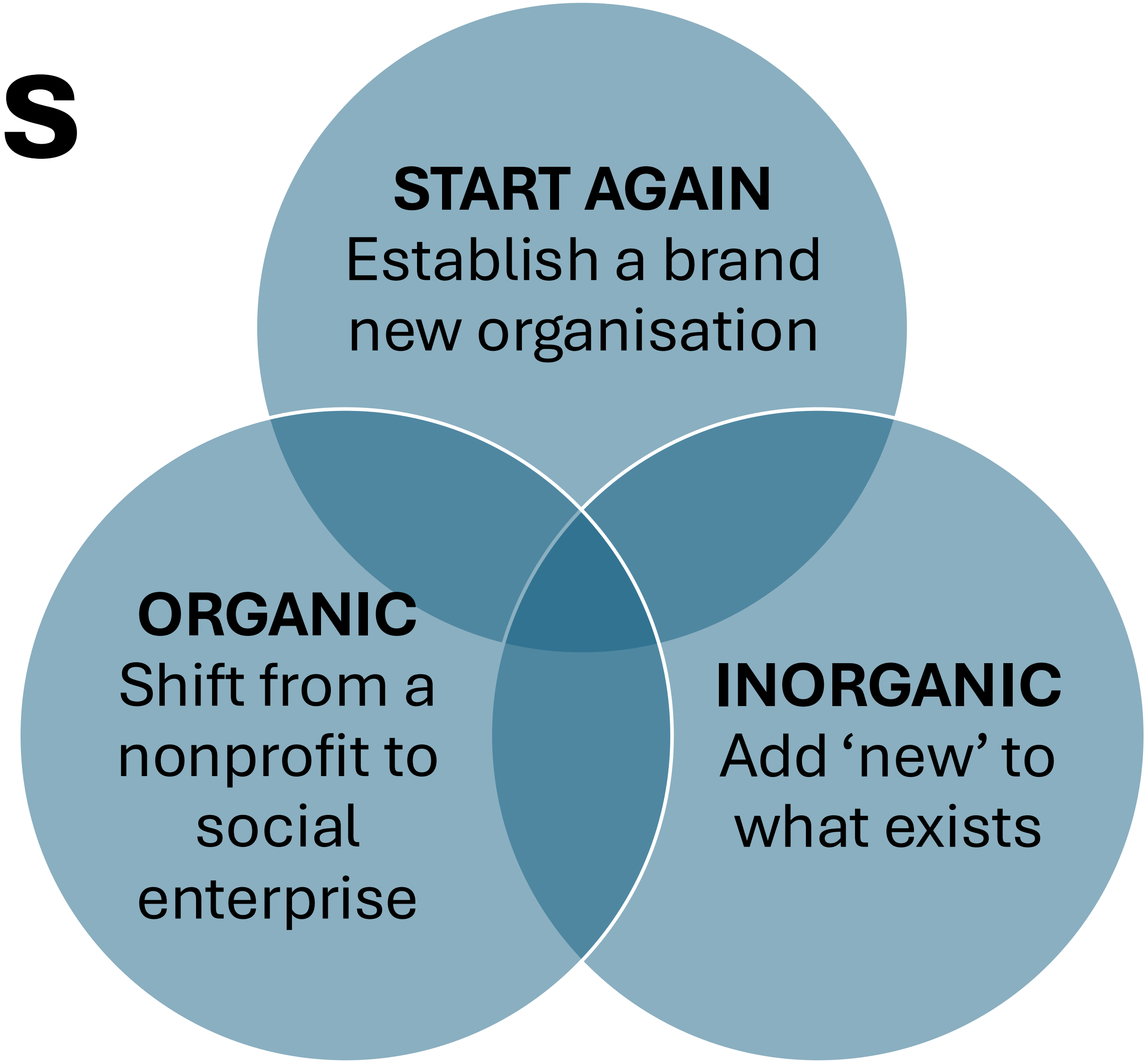
REGRANTING

INTEGRATED TECHNOLOGY PLATFORMS

The Agenda for Change

There is a great and urgent need to change from a traditional NGO that secures and implements 'funded' projects toward a 'new' organisation that can think creatively, act independently and account for its actions openly.

3 Routes


START AGAIN
Establish a brand new organisation
ORGANIC
Shift from a nonprofit to social enterprise
INORGANIC
Add ‘new’ to what exists

Pathways to Sustainability for Think-Tanks

Think Tanks cannot remain static; they must **proactively explore** pathways to long-term sustainability and strategically leverage diverse resources to amplify their impact.

There are five (5) possible scenarios:

- Community-embedded organisation
- Corporate-sponsored organisation
- Income-generating organisation
- Cause-driven organisation
- Membership-based organisation

What Traits should the Think-Tank of the Future possess to survive?

CLEAR MISSION AND IMPACT

Organisations must stay focused on their core mission and avoid chasing donor trends. They should invest in telling powerful, ground-level stories of impact, especially by involving the voices of those they serve.

BUILD ADAPTIVE CAPACITY

While staying true to their mission, organisations must be flexible in how they work. This includes updating tools, embracing technology, and using evidence to guide programming in changing contexts.

RETURN TO LOW-COST MODELS

To remain sustainable, organisations need to simplify their structures and reduce overhead costs. Lean, responsive teams can deliver change more efficiently and adapt quickly to shifting realities.

EMBRACE COLLABORATION OVER COMPETITION

Survival will depend on forming collaborative platforms that unite research, advocacy, and service delivery. Working together across sectors and levels will amplify impact and unlock more resources.

Community-embedded Think-Tank

01 TRUSTED PARTNER

Deeply integrated into the communities it serves, it acts as a trusted part of the local ecosystem, listening to and collaborating with community members.

02 LOCAL ASSETS

Communities viewed as sources of strength, recognizing their assets, including local knowledge, skills, natural resources, social networks, and financial contributions from diaspora members.

03 LOCAL OWNERSHIP

Prioritise local ownership over external funding. Community-led initiatives thrive by connecting individuals, mobilising resources, and fostering trust.

04 AGENDA ALIGNMENT

These organisations may still seek external funding, but they do so in ways that align with community-defined goals, not donor-driven agendas

Income-generating Think Tanks

01

Monetisation

Operates like a social enterprise, monetising services, products, or creating for-profit arms to achieve financial sustainability while delivering social impact.

02

Case Study:

Southern African Research and Documentation Centre (SARDC)

While largely project-funded, it deliberately generates about 20 per cent of its operational income through commercialised research, paid expert consultancies, data warehousing, and specialised publishing services.

Earned Income Models

- An **earned income model** is a strategy where an organization generates revenue by selling products, services, or expertise while staying aligned with its social mission.
- Examples:
  - Consulting and Training Services
  - Selling Digital Products
  - Product Sales
  - Membership and Subscription Models

Comparison on Revenue Strategies

Strategy	What It Is	Best For Think-Tanks That	Strengths	Considerations
Earned Income Models	Selling expertise through workshops, facilitation, or research	Have strong technical skills or thematic knowledge	Low setup cost, builds upon existing reputation	Requires marketing, consistent quality, and staff capacity
Cross-Subsidization	Running a business activity to fund social programs	Serve vulnerable groups who can't pay directly; have access to a viable business idea	Creates jobs, builds dignity, supports mission directly	May need separate management or legal structure; must balance profit vs. purpose
Corporate Partnerships & CSR	Collaborating with companies to deliver social impact	Have strong networks, visibility, or alignment with business interests	Access to funding, skills, and platforms	Requires relationship-building, clear impact reporting, and brand alignment

Building an endowment

- **Why it matters**
  - Reduces dependency on short-term donor project funding, which limits independent, long-term research agendas
  - Signals credibility and institutional permanence to funders, governments, and partners
- **Building blocks**

Seed & designate a reserve fund	Diversify funding sources	Planned & matching gifts	Investment policy	Governance
• Start with an unrestricted reserve (e.g., from surplus, a founding grant, or board contributions) before calling it an "endowment"	• Blend regional/ international foundations, bilateral donors, corporate/CSR partners, diaspora and individual giving, and alumni/board giving	• Use matching-grant campaigns to incentivise first-time large gifts; explore planned giving (bequests) from long-term supporters	• Set a prudent asset allocation and a spending rule (commonly 4–5% of a rolling average, not year-end value) to protect capital from inflation and drawdown	• Establish an independent investment committee separate from management, conflict-of-interest policies, and audited annual reporting to build donor trust

Hybrids- Cross-Subsidisation

- The organisation may run a profit-making activity that helps fund its social programs.
- The entity may create a separate for-profit arm within the organisation.
- There are usually two forms of cross-subsidisation.
- To either run as a separate legally registered entity or just separate without legal separation
- Two options:
  - Internal Program or Unit (Not Legally Separate)
  - Separate Legal Entity (Social Enterprise or Business Arm)

Membership-based Think-Tank

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Relies on subscription-paying members as its financial base, centres members in decision-making and reduces dependence on donor-driven agendas.

CASE STUDY: **South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA)**

Runs a tiered membership model — a basic subscription with research updates and briefings, plus a corporate tier for local and multinational companies offering bespoke annual briefings

Cause-driven Think Tank

Issue Focused

This type of organisation is dedicated to specific, impactful issues like gender-based violence, girls' education, climate justice, or disability rights.

Individual Support

It seeks individual support from Africa's middle class, diaspora, and youth, rather than relying only on institutional donors.

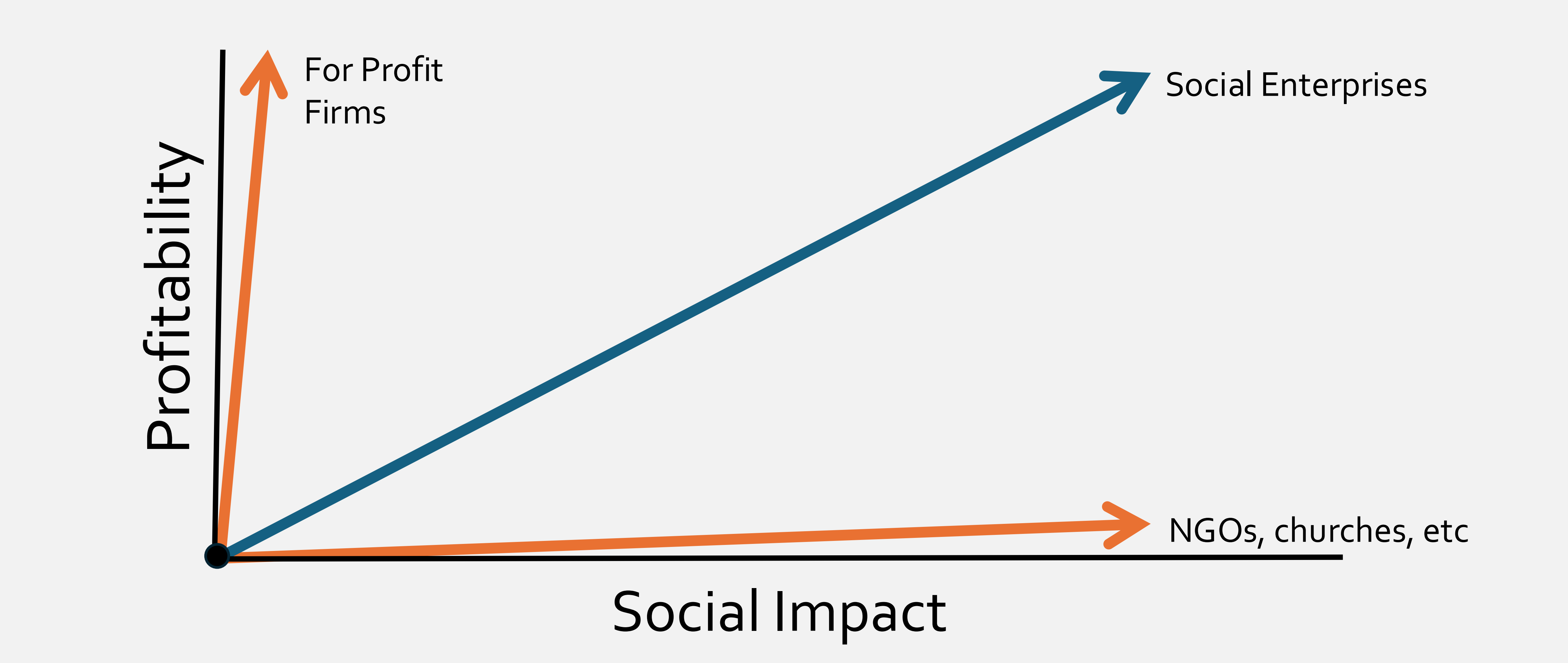
Leverage Digital

Utilising digital platforms and social media, these organisations emotionally connect with the public, share real stories, and foster a sense of urgency and community around their causes.

Should we pivot into a Social Enterprise?

- Social enterprises apply business solutions to social problems.
- **GOAL:** to achieve sustainability by enabling non-profits to support themselves financially in innovative ways instead of relying solely on grants and donations.
- Since there are no shareholders in a non-profit organisation, the profits from the related social enterprise are completely re-invested in the work of the organisation.
- The emergence of revenue-generating activities for non-profits has created a new operating model where business principles, market characteristics and values (competition, diversification, entrepreneurship, innovation, and a focus on the bottom line) co-exist and work with traditional public sector values like responsiveness to community and serving the public interest.

The Social Enterprise



HOW?

Three inter-related Actions:

Cut down to (bare) essentials

- *Decide what you are good at and cut down everything else*

Get help — but not too much

Build a business plan — a real one

- *Setting out our values and ambitions, and spelling out the external forces influencing the organisations do not count. And yet, the business plans of many organisations are just that.*

HOW?

Develop a Business Development Plan	What activities will be continued, which ones will be not?
	Where does the funding come from now, where will it come from next year?
	What operational policies will be changed?
	Which business units will be created, changed or dissolved?
	What do we expect from each employee?
	How will divisional business plans be developed? By when?
	What IT requirements have been identified and how much investment will be made?

Nine Key Blocks

Block	What It Covers
1. Key Partners	Who helps you deliver your mission (donors, companies, government, networks)
2. Key Activities	What you do to create impact and generate income (training, advocacy, services)
3. Key Resources	What assets you need (staff, tools, trust, funding, space)
4. Value Proposition	What makes your work valuable to beneficiaries and paying clients
5. Customer Relationships	How you engage and retain those who benefit or pay for your services
6. Channels	How you reach people (social media, workshops, community outreach)
7. Customer Segments	Who you serve both your beneficiaries and potential paying clients
8. Cost Structure	What it costs to run your programs and income-generating activities
9. Revenue Streams	How you earn income (grants, product sales, training fees, partnerships)

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