



Higher
Education
STRATEGY ASSOCIATES

Resources for innovation:

Back-of-the-napkin exercise

Dara Melnyk, Director of Global Engagement
EUA Funding Forum | October 15, 2026



Reasons it's so hard to cost innovations

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- How do you cost something that has not been done before?

Reasons it's so hard to cost innovations

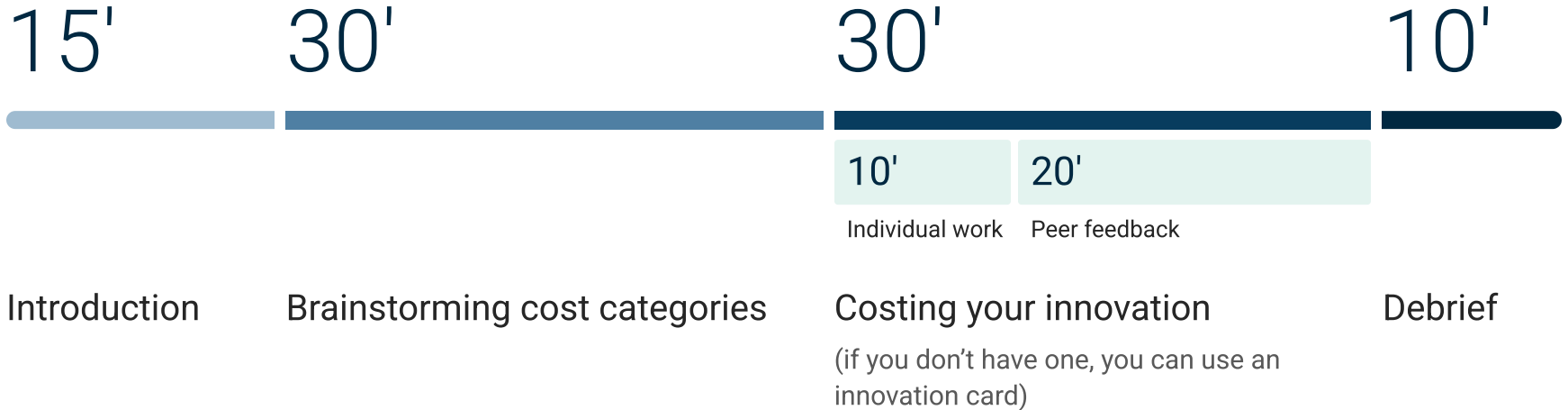
- Innovators think about the vision first, finances second (if at all)...

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- How do you cost something that has not been done before?

- Universities are not great at costing anything (e.g., academic programs)

Today's session structure



Rudimentary typology of innovations

✖ Living lab

structurally distinct unit operating within an existing institution under different rules

✱ Complete transformation

institution-wide change oriented around new values or pedagogical principles

◆ Add-on

new option layered onto existing structures

▲ Bottom-up organic initiative

ad hoc projects with potential to scale

Living lab



structurally distinct unit operating within an existing institution under different rules



University College Maastricht at
Maastricht University



Mazumdar-Shaw Advanced
Research Centre at the University
of Glasgow



BK City at TU Delft



YUFE Joint Bachelor in Urban
Sustainability Studies

Add-on

new option layered onto existing structures

News article, 7 October 2024

Tracks enters a new phase

The Tracks courses will have a more permanent roll at Chalmers. Since the start five years ago, the courses have been appreciated by students and have led to several fruitful collaborations between education, research, industry and society.



Interdisciplinary Tracks at Chalmers University of Technology

Complete transformation

institution-wide change oriented around new values or pedagogical principles



The screenshot shows the SSE website with the following content:

- Header:** STOCKHOLM SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, Svenska, search icon, menu icon.
- Breadcrumbs:** SSE > About us > FREE: The SSE educational mission
- Title:** FREE: The SSE educational mission
- Text:** At the Stockholm School of Economics, we see education as an emancipatory activity. It is about opening doors—to knowledge, to opportunities, and to new ways of thinking. You open the door to higher education, and by the time you graduate, many more doors will have opened. That is our measure of a meaningful education.
- Image:** A photograph of a modern interior space with a large arched window looking out onto a city. Inside, there are wooden benches and a small table. A sign above the window reads "VAD ÄR DET JAG SKÄVITTA OM?".
- Text below image:** Our philosophy—and our promise to students—is inspired by the philosopher Ingemar Hedenius, who argued that those best prepared for the future are “free and alive in a world of uncertainty.” Education should create freedom and enable individuals to think independently. This is the foundation of SSE. We call it **FREE**.
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What FREE stands for	⌵
SSE President	⌵
FREE in practice	⌵

New values-based curricular framework at Stockholm School of Economics
FREE: Fact-based, Reflective, Empathetic, Entrepreneurial

Bottom-up organic initiative

ad hoc projects with potential to scale



Education Innovation Grants call by EDLAB at Maastricht University



Cost categories

Costs regardless of the type



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Overlooked costs



Attention

Overlooked costs



Attention



Reputation

Overlooked costs



Attention



Reputation



Opportunity

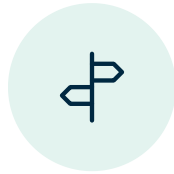
Overlooked costs



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Contingency

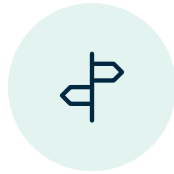
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Scrapping



Exercise

10' individual work

- Spend 10' calculating the costs of an initiative you have in mind
- You may use AI or web search for getting current prices
- If you don't have an initiative in mind, feel free to use one from the cards in front of you

→ 20' peer review

- Discuss your costing in small groups
- Structure: share the initiative, the final cost estimate, and the logic behind your calculations
- Comment on each other's estimates: what are they missing? Are there any erroneous assumptions?

What have you
discovered?





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Thank you!

