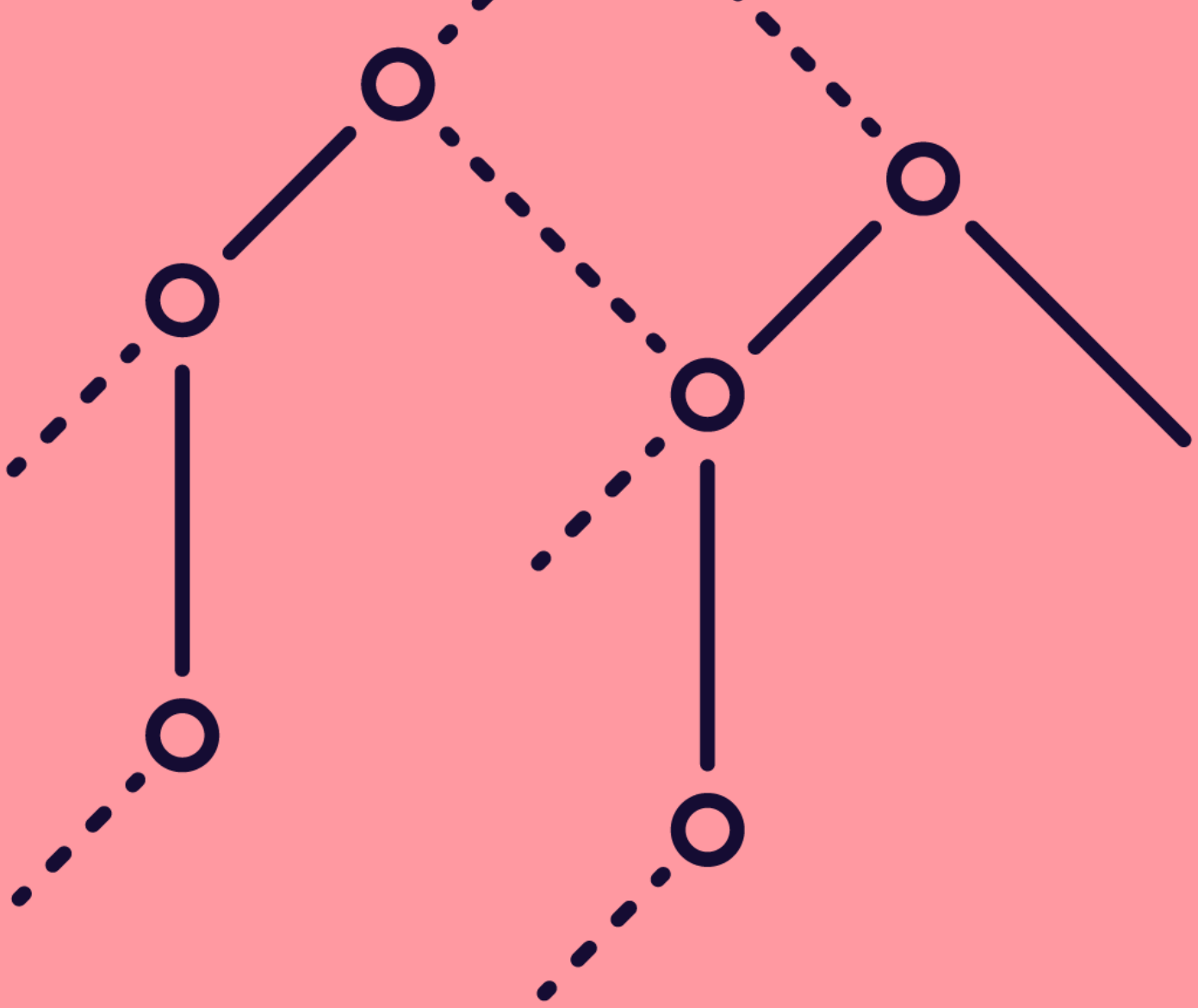

Development and Application of Innovation Commons for Strengthening Innovation Eco-Systems

FINAL REPORT

Lead organisation: Compare Foundation/DigitalWell Arena. **Partner organisations:** Karlstad Municipality, Ideon Science Park. **Funding body:** Vinnova. **Project period:** December 2024–December 2025. **Project Lead:** Lina Svensberg, Compare/DigitalWell Arena. **Project team members:** Lars Boström, Sara Egidius, Jakob Lindvall, Jonas Matthing, Anders Nilsson, Thomas Wernerheim, Andreas Hager (first half of the project). **Specialist contributors:** Jenny Iao-Jörgensen, Ia Modin.

CITY OF KARLSTAD compare DIGITALWELL ARENA IDEON SCIENCE PARK VINNOVA

A note on what this report is, and what it is not

This is the final report of a specific project. It documents what the project *Development and Application of Innovation Commons for Strengthening Innovation Eco-Systems* set out to do, what it did, and what it learned. It is not a comprehensive treatment of innovation commons as a field. The project sat within, and contributed to, a broader movement of work on innovation commons; work that began before this project, continues alongside it, and will continue after it. The companion report *Can Innovation Commons Be Managed Digitally — And Should They Be?* (Wernerheim, Boström, & Lindvall, 2026) documents this project's technical work (WP3) in full. Beyond these published artefacts, the project team and members of the reference group continue to build on the insights generated here, taking different aspects of the work forward in their own contexts; through ongoing communities of practice, policy work at national and international levels, and continued research and writing.

What this report does is narrower. It documents the project on its own terms and presents two specialist contributions in full: Ia Modin on governance (section 3.2.1) and Jenny Iao-Jörgensen on evaluation (section 3.2.2). Both are made available here as standalone reference material for practitioners, intermediaries, and researchers working with innovation commons systems.

1. Summary

The project *Development and Application of Innovation Commons for Strengthening Innovation Eco-Systems* was funded by Vinnova and carried out from December 2024 to December 2025 by Compare/DigitalWell Arena, Karlstad Municipality, and Ideon Science Park. It built on a Vinnova-funded pre-study (2023–2024) and moved from theoretical exploration to applied work: testing whether innovation commons (governance arrangements for pooling distributed information under shared rules) can be deliberately cultivated within existing innovation support systems.

The project was structured around three work packages. **WP1** focused on establishing and sustaining a Learning Community for Innovation Commons. **WP2** focused on developing the management of innovation commons systems, including an article on governance and an evaluation framework. **WP3** explored whether and under what conditions digital infrastructure can support innovation commons systems.

The project produced three main outcomes. First, a Learning Community for Innovation Commons has been established, has grown to approximately 60 members, and is now sustained as an ongoing structure by DigitalWell Arena. The community has met every three weeks through peer learning sessions since March 2025, accumulating 9 documented sessions during the project period and 6 further sessions in the months that followed. Second, two external experts have participated and contributed. Ia Modin guided an exploration, together with the project team members, into how governance questions may be approached, and the complexity of governing different kinds of communities and different kinds of resources. Her work is included as an article in section 3.2.1. Jenny Iao-Jörgensen has developed an evaluation framework for innovation commons, which has been applied to live communities, and is presented in full in section 3.2.2 of this report. Third, a digital infrastructure pilot has been carried out, producing the companion report *Can Innovation Commons Be Managed Digitally — And Should They Be?*, which documents the design, prototyping, and evaluation of a knowledge manager and community platform within a live community context.

The project's evaluation framework was applied to two communities, the Demand Acceleration Community and the Learning Community for Innovation Commons, through structured surveys and collective sensemaking sessions. Both surveys show substantive uptake of the project's ideas and approaches; the detailed findings are reported in section 3.

The project also generated two insights that go beyond its original scope: the structural mismatch between current funding and evaluation instruments and the discovery-driven nature of work on innovation commons systems, and a silent, structural competence gap in information asset management across the innovation support system. Both are presented in section 4.

Content

2. Background and point of departure

The project builds on a Vinnova-funded pre-study (2023–2024) which confirmed, through interviews across the Swedish innovation support system, a persistent and widely shared problem: valuable methods, tools, frameworks, and accumulated experience are developed through publicly funded projects and then abandoned. Without sustainable structures for ongoing stewardship, shared development assets quickly become outdated. As one practitioner put it: "We keep creating things over and over again. But there's nothing in place for management. After a year, it's outdated, and then you might as well scrap it."

The pre-study proposed that the concept of innovation commons (drawing on Elinor Ostrom's principles for governing shared resources (Ostrom, 1990) and Jason Potts' theory of how pooling distributed information enables entrepreneurial discovery (Potts, 2019)) offers a promising framework for addressing this challenge. Four priority areas were identified: sustainable financing structures, a deeper understanding of innovation commons systems as an organisational form, methods for monitoring and evaluation, and technical platforms for the management of innovation commons resources. The pre-study produced a series of reports addressing the four priority areas: a summary report, a policy paper, a financing manual, a paper on models for organising commons, and a legal memorandum (Svensberg, Lindvall, Danielsson, & Nilsson, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c, 2024d; *Juridiskt PM*, 2024). The full reports are listed in the References and available at the project's pre-study page.

A direct practical starting point was the Demand Acceleration Community, a learning network that had emerged organically from work within DigitalWell Arena, originally centred around the municipality of Karlstad, exploring public procurement as a driver of innovation. This community demonstrated that the most valuable resource is not any single method or tool, but the distributed information that practitioners bring together when they collaborate under shared governance.

The project also built on a parallel Region Värmland-funded pre-study on information structures in learning networks (ISLNd; Wernerheim, Svensberg, Lindvall, Joelsson, Lundkvist, & Matthing, 2024), which provided grounding in how digital infrastructure interacts with community governance and shaped the design of WP3.

The central hypothesis was stated clearly in the project application: that innovation commons systems can enhance the efficiency of innovation ecosystems. The project's task was to move from hypothesis to tested practice and to develop the tools, governance frameworks, and infrastructure that would enable others to do the same.

A note on terminology. One thing the project learned, perhaps later than it should have, was how much of its early confusion came down to language. The word *commons* is used in many ways across the field: sometimes to refer to a resource, sometimes to a community, sometimes to governance arrangements, sometimes to the whole. None of these uses is wrong, and the variation is well established in the literature, but when they mix in the same discussion, reasoning together becomes difficult. The project therefore settled on four terms, three for the elements of an innovation commons system and one for the whole, drawing on Ostrom (1990) and Potts (2019):

- ***Innovation commons resource***: The shared pool of information assets that a community contributes to, maintains, and develops under shared governance. The term *resource* refers to the pool as a whole. The pool consists of information assets that have been contributed or developed by the community. An information asset may be in the form of an artefact (a document, a dataset, a piece of code), but the value it carries lies in the information it contains: the *information items*. An information asset, expressed in an artefact, may include any number of information items. While artefacts can be removed, erased and destroyed, information items, once accessed, remain with those who have read or heard them.
- ***Innovation commons governance***: The rules, roles, and decision-making arrangements through which the community governs its collaboration and its shared information assets. Governance operates in two dimensions: the governance of the community as a group (membership, participation, decision-making, conflict resolution) and the governance of the information assets in the resource pool (the terms and conditions for contribution, access, use, dissemination, and further development).
- ***Innovation commons community***: The group of actors who participate, using and developing information assets, exploring new ideas based on access to the resource pool, and taking part in governance.
- ***Innovation commons system***: The whole: the resource pool, the community, and the governance arrangements.

These terms are used consistently throughout this report.

Scope of testing. The project's three test cases (the Demand Acceleration Community, the Visual Impact Community, and the Learning Community for Innovation Commons) are all communities formed around resources of the innovation support system: methods, working approaches, frameworks, and accumulated practitioner experience. The information being pooled is, in all three cases, pre-competitive and largely experience-based. None of the cases involves commercially sensitive information pooling between competing organisations, technical assets adjacent to patentable inventions, or data whose disclosure would carry direct commercial consequences. The governance methods and evaluation frameworks have been tested against, and most reliably apply to, the pre-competitive and experience-sharing settings that characterise much of the work of innovation intermediaries, science parks, and the broader innovation support system. Innovation commons systems whose resources include commercially sensitive information would raise additional governance demands that this project did not test.

3. Project activities and outcomes

3.1 WP1: Building and sustaining a learning community

3.1.1 Community establishment and operation

The Learning Community for Innovation Commons (the Community of Practice described in the project application) was formally established at the start of the project period. The community has grown to approximately 60 members drawn from a broad range of organisations across the Swedish innovation support system: science parks and incubators (including Ideon Science Park, Science Park Jönköping, Science Park Gotland, Netport Science Park, Kalmar Science Park, Linköping Science Park, Bron Innovation, and Bizmaker), municipalities and regions (including Karlstad Municipality, Helsingborgs stad, Gävle, Lund, Region Dalarna, Region Stockholm, Region Värmland, Region Kalmar, Region Gotland, and Region Västernorrland), universities and research organisations (including Göteborg University, Malmö University, Lund University/Mälardalen University, Umeå Innovation, and RISE), and a range of intermediaries, consultancies, and practitioners. The community is now sustained by the project partners beyond the project period.

The community is hosted on the Mighty Networks platform, which allows member organisations to host their own sub-communities contributing back into the shared learning ecosystem. Sub-communities active during the project include The Visual Impact hosted by Ideon Science Park and a Twin Transition community hosted by Compare.

One spillover effect worth noting is the establishment of a learning community within the Swedish County Administrative Boards (Länsstyrelserna), modelled on the project's community approach. This is the kind of value created through use that conventional project evaluation is poorly equipped to see.

3.1.2 Peer learning sessions

The community has met every three weeks since March 2025, accumulating 9 documented peer learning sessions during the project period and 6 further sessions in the months that followed, as the community continued under DigitalWell Arena's stewardship. Recordings and summaries are available in the community space on the Mighty Networks platform. Members, who are themselves practitioners, researchers, and intermediaries across the innovation support system, host the sessions in turn, sharing work from their own practice and inviting collective reflection. Topics spanned the theory and practice of innovation commons, ecosystem development, evaluation in complex systems, digital infrastructure, and illustrative cases from adjacent domains. The range reflects the community's function as a space for collective sensemaking across organisational and sectoral boundaries; sessions have ranged from welfare-system innovation in Norway to AI infrastructure for municipalities to the philosophy of dialogue-based development.

3.1.3 Capacity building and dissemination

In addition to the community's own peer learning sessions, training on innovation commons was delivered to SISP (Swedish Incubators and Science Parks) and other organisations in the innovation support system.

Three reference group meetings were held during the project period, and reference group members were consulted on an ongoing basis throughout. The first meeting (March 2025) introduced the project framework and heard a presentation from Kjell-Håkan Närfelt on ecosystems and innovation commons. The second meeting (June 2025) reported on progress across all three work packages and included a presentation by Ia Modin on information management in innovation commons contexts and a first draft on her questionnaire method, which directly shaped the understanding of governance. The third meeting (November 2025) presented the evaluation framework developed by Jenny Iao-Jörgensen and discussed the playbook concept and plans for the final period. The full reference group is named in section 7.

3.1.4 Survey evidence: learning community outcomes

An evaluation survey of the Learning Community (n=12) was administered in February 2026 and followed by a collective sensemaking session. Key findings:

- 58% report expectations met to a high degree; 33% partly.
- 91% report a changed or deepened understanding of innovation commons and ecosystem development since joining.
- 67% report that ideas, perspectives, or working approaches from the community have influenced their work.
- 75% report that knowledge in the community is created through a combination of participant exchange, concrete case reflection, and project team presentations, not through presentations alone.
- Observed changes include: greater interest in shared infrastructure or commons (4 respondents), changes in how collaboration or innovation is understood and formulated (4), and new conversations within organisations or networks (2).
- One respondent reports having started their own learning community in their professional role, the direct origin of the Länsstyrelsen learning community noted above.

The survey also surfaced genuine challenges: terminology is experienced as abstract and potentially excluding; the step from theory to practice is long; and mandate and leadership backing are often absent. These tensions informed the design of the frameworks and ideas presented in section 3.2.

3.2 WP2: Developing the management of innovation commons systems

WP2 set out to develop frameworks and structured methods for two core questions: how innovation commons systems can be governed, and how the value they create can be evaluated and monitored. The two questions are interdependent (governance arrangements shape what evaluation can attend to, and evaluation feeds back into how governance is adjusted over time) but each requires its own analytical treatment.

This section presents the governance article and the evaluation framework in full, followed by the project's testing and application of them in live communities.

- **Section 3.2.1: Governance**, by Ia Modin. The contribution addresses why governance matters in innovation commons settings, the relationship between the innovation commons community and the resource it pools, the calibration of governance arrangements, the configuration logic of governance design, and the specific governance questions that arise in learning and experience-sharing communities. It introduces the questionnaire method, a structured approach for surfacing and codifying governance choices before conflict makes them visible.
- **Section 3.2.2: Evaluation**, by Jenny Iao-Jörgensen. The contribution develops an evaluation framework oriented toward learning and judgement rather than verification. It establishes that value in an innovation commons system is collective, contingent, and cumulative, and that evaluation must therefore follow a contribution logic rather than an attribution logic. Eight lenses for directing evaluative attention are introduced, together with sets of reflective questions for use throughout the lifecycle of an innovation commons system.

Section 3.2.3 documents the application of the method and the framework within the project's three case communities.

3.2.1 Governance

Author: Ia Modin

Governance matters

Among innovation intermediaries and support actors, sharing information and pooling resources are often regarded as positive acts that need encouragement, not regulation. Questions regarding governance matters are rarely raised and there is often active resistance to addressing them. This resistance has two main sources which reinforce each other.

The first is an association between governance and information exclusion. The lens of intellectual property leads actors to assume that "managing information" necessarily equals restricting access, protecting ownership, preventing use. Actors wanting to *encourage* sharing of information and resources therefore, mistakenly, perceive information governance as contrary to what they are trying to achieve and therefore something to avoid and minimise rather than something to design.

The second is a perception that governance arrangements, especially as regards governance of information, belong to the domain of formal agreements between legal entities – consortium agreements, licensing contracts, joint ventures – and that they consequently have no place in the open, trust-based, exploratory collaborations that innovation commons systems are meant to be.

Both these reasons of resistance rest on misunderstandings. Governance of shared resources is the *configuration* of rules for contribution, use, dissemination, and further development; those rules can be permissive or restrictive, and the configuration is free to make. In addition, every set of shared rules that participants agree to follow constitutes, in legal terms, *an agreement*, regardless of whether or not the community or its participants use that word.

Governance questions left unaddressed do not disappear; they get answered by assumption. Human beings are remarkably adept at constructing implicit governance: in the absence of explicit rules, every participant will form their own understanding of what rules must surely apply. These assumptions feel self-evident to each individual, until they collide with someone else's equally self-evident assumptions. When that happens, the resulting conflict is not merely a disagreement about a specific issue; it becomes a crisis of legitimacy and trust that calls into question the entire foundation of the collaboration. Such conflicts tend to be notoriously difficult to overcome, because what has broken is not a rule but the mutual confidence that participants were ever operating under the same terms.

The governance choices made do not merely regulate an innovation commons system; they define what it will have the capacity to become and what it can enable.

The community and the resources

An innovation commons community and the resource it creates cannot be separated. The resource assets are pooled because participants contribute; participants contribute because the community sustains the conditions that make sharing worthwhile.

Participation in an innovation commons community is an active commitment. The governance framework must address the full arc of participation, from the conditions for joining to the consequences of departure. Designing governance deliberately allows the community to align its rules with its actual conditions and purpose, and to adjust them as those conditions change.

Participating in an innovation commons community carries two distinct forms of value. First, the power of participation: the ability to influence the community's direction, contribute to collective decision-making, and shape the governance itself. Second, the power of the pool of resource assets: access to the resources that the members contribute to and generate. Both forms of value depend on trust, trust that fellow members will contribute in good faith, that information shared will be treated according to the agreed terms, and that the community's governance will function fairly.

Those affected by the rules ought to engage in making and modifying the rules. The practical questions that follow are: How are governance rules established? How are they changed? Do all members have equal voice, or are some decisions reserved for a smaller group? Is the decision-making model based on formal voting, consensus, or some other mechanism? How are proposals for rule changes initiated and processed?

The design of decision-making processes directly affects participants' sense of ownership over the governance framework. Rules that participants have helped shape are more likely to be respected and followed than rules that have been imposed.

An innovation commons community may engage its participants in many ways: contributing to the pool of resources, but equally participating in collaborative exploration, joint production of knowledge, shared learning, development of tools and methods, or the ongoing work of maintaining the community itself. To be as explicit as possible about which of these are required and which are optional will clarify the expectations. Participants will need to perceive the balance between what each participant gives and what they gain as fair; where they do not, engagement will erode. This proportionality cannot be prescribed in exact terms, but the governance framework shall make the expectations visible and create conditions for participants to raise concerns when the balance shifts. Sustaining this balance requires that participants have reason to trust that the agreed expectations are being met.

Calibrating governance

Governance that is more elaborate than the community's actual needs can itself become an obstacle to participation and collaboration. Community governance that prescribes complex decision-making procedures and rigid organisational structures for a community that is small, exploratory, and built on personal relationships creates friction that works against the informality such communities depend on and thrive from. Information governance that requires extensive confidentiality frameworks and detailed user provisions when the information being contributed is pre-competitive and low-sensitivity signals a level of formality that is disproportionate to the risks involved.

Participants who lack the resources to evaluate and comply with complex frameworks may decline to join. Participants who do join may experience the governance as an expression of distrust rather than a foundation for trust. The administrative burden of compliance diverts attention from the community's purpose.

Over-governance also risks becoming aspirational governance by default: if the community prescribes processes it lacks the capacity to perform, the rules will not be followed.

The test is proportionality: does the governance address the questions that the community's collaboration and information sharing actually raise, or does it address questions that are not yet relevant and whose presence deters rather than enables participation?

However, governance that fails to address the questions that the community's collaboration and resource sharing actually raise may make it difficult for participants to assess the benefits and risks of participation. The absence of explicit rules does not necessarily create openness; it can create uncertainty, which tends to produce caution rather than generosity, both in how participants engage with each other and in what resources they are willing to contribute.

A community without clear rules for decision-making, conflict resolution, or what may be done with shared resources will find that these questions become answered informally, by power dynamics and personalities within the community rather than by design. Implicit governance tends to reflect the interests of the most assertive participants and to break down when diverging assumptions collide. On the side of the pooling of resources, participants who cannot determine the consequences of contributing will contribute and engage less.

Under-governance can become particularly damaging because it is difficult to recognise from within. A community with few explicit rules may interpret its informality as a sign of mutual trust. This interpretation holds only as long as the collaboration is uncomplicated and the resources being contributed or being generated are mostly generic and carry low risk. The moment a disagreement arises about influence or direction, or a participant discovers that the terms governing shared assets were never established, the absence of governance is recast as a failure of structure or protection. Trust that was assumed rather than constructed rarely survives that discovery.

Governing the resources

Choosing a governance model for pooled resource assets is, at its core, a matter of configuration. When considering the innovation commons context, the rules that will govern the assets shared between participants and generated through the collaboration must be assessed with the purpose of the innovation commons system in mind. The configuration needs to take into account the kind of collaboration the community will entail and the type of assets and resources it wants to incentivise the participants to contribute and generate.

The set of governance rules can be understood as a control board. Each potential rule – what must be done, what is permitted, what is prohibited – functions as a switch that can be set on or off. The resulting configuration constitutes the governance model. If the community wishes, all information contributed can be completely open and free to use, modify, adapt and build on, by anyone. This is neither better nor worse than other configurations; it is a choice. Each configuration will shape the collaboration: the rules affect what participants are willing to contribute, and what they will be willing to co-create.

The choice of configuration must be congruent with the community's actual conditions and purpose. A governance model suited to one type of collaboration may be poorly matched to another. But making this assessment requires understanding that a choice exists and grasping its implications.

If the community's governance applies only to information formally submitted to a designated repository, then everything communicated through other channels falls outside the rules. The community may have invested substantial effort in configuring its terms and conditions, only to find that much of the information, documents and other resources actually exchanged between participants is not covered by them. If, on the other hand, the governance applies to each and every piece of information communicated between participants in community contexts, then every conversation, presentation, and email would become a potential contribution to the resource pool, with consequences that most participants will neither have anticipated nor be equipped to manage.

The community must determine how to draw this boundary and make the choice explicit. The solution need not be a single rule applied uniformly; different forms of information exchange may warrant different treatment.

Learning and experience sharing communities

When an innovation commons community operates primarily as a space for learning and experience sharing, a set of governance questions arises that is easy to overlook precisely because the information being shared is perceived as non-sensitive. The risks in this context are not commercial in nature; they relate to the quality and integrity of what is shared and the reputation of those who contributed it.

Attribution – whether the source, and where relevant the author, must be acknowledged when information items are used or disseminated – serves several functions simultaneously. It recognises the contributor. It makes the flow of knowledge through the community visible. And it creates accountability for what is shared. The community may choose to require attribution, make it optional, or prohibit it; each choice produces different effects on contribution incentives and on the community's culture.

A particularly consequential question is whether participants may modify artefacts accessed from the resource pool and distribute the modified version to a wider audience. In a learning community, adaptation is natural and valuable; practitioners take a method and adjust it to their context. But modification introduces risks that the original contributor cannot control. When the governance permits modification and further distribution, the community must also determine whether it must be indicated that an artefact has been modified, and in what respects. Without this requirement, modified versions may circulate as though they were the original, creating confusion about both the resource itself and what the community endorses.

The question sharpens further when the community considers the risks associated with modified versions being distributed without prior approval from the original contributor. A governance configuration that permits this gives participants maximum freedom to adapt and share, but it also means that the original contributor may find their name associated with a version of their work that they have not reviewed, that may contain errors, or that may be of lower quality than the original. The reputational risk is not limited to cases where the original contributor is named. Signature methods, compilations, or processes that circulate in distorted or degraded form suffer damage to their own integrity and credibility. Where the work can be traced to its originator, the damage reaches them as well. These risks are frequently underestimated in non-competitive settings.

The community must also consider whether information assets developed on the basis of resources and assets accessed from the community resource pool must be contributed back to the resource pool under the same terms as the original. This is a reciprocity mechanism that increases the potential for learning and development in the community.

Intellectual property and Creative Commons

Some information assets contributed to the resource pool will be subject to formal intellectual property rights, in practice, most commonly copyright and, in some cases, patents. Less frequently, design rights may be relevant.

When the governance rules permit participants the use of an information asset that comprises also of copyright or a patent, this permission is in legal terms a licence: a right to do something that one would not otherwise be entitled to do. This is true regardless of whether the community uses the word "licence" or thinks of itself as granting licences. The legal characterisation matters because it carries implications, particularly in the patent

context, where the scope and conditions of a licence can affect the enforceability and value of the underlying right. Participants must understand that the community's information-sharing rules have licensing consequences.

Creative Commons is the established framework for modular licensing of copyrighted material. It allows rights holders to select from a set of standardised terms and conditions establishing what others may do with a copyrighted work: whether it may be adapted, redacted, used commercially, and whether derivative works must carry the same conditions. The conditions are widely understood, legally tested, and immediately recognisable.

Creative Commons operates at the level of copyright, and consequently the standardised terms correspond only to aspects made actionable by copyright law: control over reproduction, distribution, adaptation, and public display. Copyright also grants the rights holder the exclusive right to decide whether to make a text or a picture public. This question is not addressed by Creative Commons, because the framework is designed for works that have already been published and made available.

Copyright does not extend to the content conveyed through a copyrighted work. Ideas, conclusions, methods, and factual findings are not protected by copyright, even when they are expressed in a text or image that is. This means that a Creative Commons licence governs what may be done with the work as such; it says nothing about what may be done with what the work describes or explains.

Being granted a Creative Commons licence permits certain uses of the text as a copyrighted work: reproducing it, distributing it, potentially adapting it. These are acts of disposal over the copyright object. But reading the text, understanding its content, discussing it, applying the knowledge it conveys, drawing conclusions from it: these are acts of disposal over the information object. Copyright does not regulate them, and consequently a copyright licence does not address them. Consider a document accessed under a Creative Commons licence, describing a manufacturing method. The licence may permit adaptations to the document text but can say nothing about the reader's right to apply the method.

For innovation commons information governance, Creative Commons is valuable in two distinct ways. First, it can be used directly to govern copyright-related aspects of information assets with established legal clarity; though the community would do well to ensure that participants understand that copyright never governs the content itself, only its expression in artefacts. Second, and beyond direct use, the principle that complex governance choices can be decomposed into modular, combinable conditions, each addressing a specific question, can be applied to the full range of governance questions that an innovation commons community must address.

The questionnaire method

Active governance design requires that the participants confront their own assumptions. Participants in any collective setting carry expectations about what rules apply to the group and its activities. Some of these expectations reflect positions the participant has never consciously examined; others take shape only when a specific situation demands an answer. In either case, the participant experiences the resulting position as self-evident, until it collides with someone else's equally self-evident position. These individual assumptions also have a tendency to shift over time. But where the assumptions were never stated explicitly,

there is no baseline against which the shift can be recognised. Participants may continue to assume that a shared understanding exists when, in substance, it no longer does.

In a formal collaboration, there is usually a contract setting the rules for activities, undertakings, rights and obligations. While this in itself will not guarantee the understanding of the content and meaning of such a contract, and much less the compliance with it, it does however constitute codified rules that can be revisited if needed.

In the setting of collaboration such as an innovation commons community, the governance rules are best addressed collectively by the community, and formalised in a document to make them equally explicit.

One practical approach is to require the community to work through a structured set of governance questions, a questionnaire where each question must be answered with a definitive choice between defined alternatives, preferably yes or no. This method compels participants to take a position rather than leave a question open, and it makes the positions visible to the community as a whole.

The method serves two purposes. The first is to produce explicit and written rules. Without written rules to consult, each participant will act on their own understanding of what the rules must surely be – and those understandings will inevitably diverge. The second is that the process of working through concrete governance questions together, before any situation has arisen that forces a reactive answer, gives participants a shared understanding of what the rules address and what they require. In addition, rules established through collective deliberation carry a different quality than rules drafted separately and presented for acceptance. Participants who have taken part in making the choices are more likely to recognise them as legitimate, and also more likely to understand what the rules require and therefore more likely to comply with them.

A community that has worked through the questionnaire may still disagree, but it will disagree about explicit positions within an established set of rules rather than about what the framework of rules was ever understood to be.

The questionnaire does not presuppose restrictive answers. A community may choose to permit open dissemination, unrestricted use, free adaptation and redistribution. There is no principled basis for valuing one configuration over another; the choice must be guided by the participants, the purpose of the innovation commons system, and the nature of the resources and assets the community expects to pool and generate.

The process of working through the questionnaire will reveal to the participants where they align and where they do not; questions that produce immediate consensus can be settled efficiently, while questions that reveal disagreement identify precisely the areas where governance design requires the most careful collective deliberation.

3.2.2 Evaluation

Author: Jenny Iao-Jörgensen

What we mean by evaluation and monitoring in an innovation commons systems context

Innovation commons systems are complex adaptive systems; outcomes emerge from the interaction between resources, communities, and institutional arrangements in ways that cannot be fully predicted or controlled. The resource and the community develop in parallel, influencing each other over time. The institutional arrangements (governance, rules, decision-making structures) exist precisely to create predictability within this complexity. But the system as a whole remains non-predictive: how resources are used, what value emerges, and how the system evolves depend on what actors actually do.

This means that evaluation must also attend to whether the institutional arrangements themselves are functioning as intended, or whether they are locking the system into undesirable patterns or creating unpredictability where predictability is needed. The conventional understanding of evaluation treats it as a systematic, objective assessment of whether initiatives have achieved their intended goals and generated the expected results for society. Accountability and attribution are central: an effect, in that tradition, means something that would not have happened without the intervention. That logic is coherent when outcomes are predictable and causation is traceable. In innovation commons contexts, neither condition holds. In entrepreneurial contexts (where outcomes and effects cannot be predicted) conventional approaches to evaluation break down. Evaluation frameworks designed for project delivery struggle to capture the distributed, cumulative value created when information circulates and is recombined across actors. The connections between resources, use, and outcomes are often indirect, shaped by context, and dependent on what actors do, making counterfactual assessment and attribution inherently limited.

This does not mean that evaluation is impossible or unnecessary. It means that evaluation must serve a different function: not verifying whether what was promised has been delivered, but supporting judgement about whether what is being developed (e.g., outputs, prototypes, and learning) is aligned with the intended direction of the innovation commons system and its community. Evaluation is here understood as an embedded practice of governance and learning; one that supports judgement and decision-making when outcomes are uncertain. While this approach resembles formative evaluation in its emphasis on learning and adaptation, it goes further by embedding evaluative processes within continuous processes of development, governance, and collective sensemaking. Its purpose is not to check whether targets have been met. It is to make assumptions visible, track what is actually happening, and inform decisions about what to do next, as shared resources are developed, governed, and adapted over time. Evaluation, understood this way, is not a separate activity that happens after the work. It is part of the work.

In innovation policy and programme contexts, monitoring and evaluation are often treated as separate functions, monitoring is constant, tracking execution and results on an ongoing basis, while evaluation is treated as periodic assessments of outcomes and impacts. In this report, we do not separate them. Instead, evaluation is used in a broader sense to refer to the ongoing processes of observing, interpreting, and learning from how innovation commons systems develop in practice, including activities often described as monitoring. This

continuous attention extends beyond individual projects, into the ongoing use and further development of shared resources. Separating the two risks reducing monitoring to compliance and delaying evaluation until it is too late to inform decisions; keeping them together keeps the focus on learning, sensemaking, and adaptation.

Evaluation is therefore embedded within both development and governance, forming part of continuous cycles of experimentation, learning, and revision through which the system evolves. Signals from practice (who uses what, how, and what changes) are interpreted collectively to inform decisions about whether to adapt, continue, scale, or stop. These signals also inform whether governance arrangements remain appropriate as the resource and community evolve, or whether rules, roles, or decision processes require adjustment. Evaluation is what tells you whether what you are doing is worth continuing, and when it is time to change course or stop. Evaluation also plays a central role in how shared resources are captured and recognised as innovation commons resources available to the community, and in how the processes, terms, and conditions governing their use, maintenance, and further development are designed and adapted over time.

Because this kind of evaluation cannot rely on simple cause-and-effect logic, rigour comes from transparency rather than attribution: making assumptions explicit, drawing on different kinds of evidence, and documenting how interpretations are formed and revised over time. Specific methods may be useful at different stages, but they are means, not ends. The question is not “did this resource cause that outcome?”, which is rarely answerable in a complex system. The question is instead: “in what ways did this resource plausibly contribute to what we observe?” This is a different standard of evidence, but not a weaker one.

Conventional evaluation tends to ask whether a project succeeded, a question that assumes a fixed point of assessment and a stable notion of what success means. For an innovation commons system, that question is not just insufficient; it misidentifies what is being evaluated. What matters is not whether the system has succeeded but whether it is sustaining: whether participation is maintained, whether the resource continues to be used and developed, and whether the conditions enabling that use remain in place. Participation patterns themselves may be uneven. Contributions in collaborative systems often follow power-law distributions, where a small core of participants generates a large share of activity. Evaluation must therefore interpret participation patterns carefully rather than assume uniform engagement. In addition, evaluation should consider not only how value is created through shared resources, but also how it is captured and distributed among actors. Uneven patterns of value capture may affect incentives to contribute and, over time, the sustainability of the innovation commons system.

Taken together, this implies five guiding commitments for evaluation in innovation commons systems:

- Prioritising learning and judgement over verification.
- Embedding evaluation in ongoing practice. This implies that monitoring relies not only on predefined indicators, but on continuous interaction with participants to understand how resources are used and what challenges and opportunities emerge in practice.
- Focusing on contribution rather than attribution.
- Explicitly attending to tensions, exclusions, and unintended effects (including patterns of value capture and uneven distribution).
- Attending to the co-evolution of resource, community, and governance over time.

This section focuses on the questions and learning practices that support such judgement, not on specific tools or techniques. The intention is to provide a shared orientation that holds across different types of innovation commons systems, while leaving room for methodological choice.

Evaluation as an integrated learning process

Evaluation is not something that happens at a fixed point. It runs through the entire lifecycle of innovation commons resources and evolves with them. Evaluation builds on continuous observation of how the system evolves in practice, including patterns of use, contribution, and interaction. Innovation commons systems tend to evolve through stages: exploration, consolidation, and renewal. Evaluation therefore shifts its focus over time: early attention centres on whether the underlying need and community hypothesis hold; later attention turns to patterns of use, contribution, and the sustainability of the system.

This stage-based perspective also implies different evaluation priorities over time. In early stages, evaluation focuses on whether development generates actionable learning about needs, actors, and potential uses. In intermediate stages, the focus shifts to patterns of use and contribution: whether shared resources are taken up, adapted, and sustained by a growing community. In later stages, evaluation focuses on sustainability and systemic value: whether participation is maintained, resources continue to be developed, and the innovation commons system contributes to broader changes in the ecosystem.

Rather than following a linear sequence, it supports learning around three recurring questions: where are we now? Are we heading in the right direction? And what would it take to close the gap between where we are and where we want to be?

Early in the development of an innovation commons system, evaluation focuses on clarifying shared needs, testing the hypotheses that motivated development, and understanding existing capacities, relations, and constraints. At this stage, evaluation questions explore how early signals from use and interaction are interpreted and what they suggest for further action.

As development and use progress, evaluation helps reflect on whether what is happening in practice matches the intended direction, and what that suggests for further development or governance choices.

Over time, evaluation supports collective judgement about whether to adapt, continue, scale, or stop. The main question becomes: what should we do differently, and who decides?

These questions operate at different levels. The first concerns what is being developed and why — whether the understanding of the problem, the actors, and the context is adequate. The second concerns how — whether the methods, processes, and ways of working are appropriate. The third concerns application — whether the resources are being used in ways that create the intended value. Across all three, a recurring meta-question runs: how do we know? What evidence, signals, or experiences are we drawing on — and what might we be missing?

Its value lies not in producing reports, but in strengthening the feedback between what happens in practice and the decisions that shape what happens next.

Where to direct attention

Evaluation needs something to look at. The areas below are not a checklist of things to measure; they are lenses for making sense of what is happening in practice and connecting it to decisions about what to do next.

Hypotheses and assumptions: what assumptions about needs, incentives, participation, or value creation are currently guiding the development of the innovation commons system, and what evidence from practice supports or challenges them?

Use, reuse, and contribution: are shared resources being used? By whom? Are people contributing back, or only consuming? How do these patterns change over time?

Value capture and distribution: who benefits from the use of shared resources? Are contributors also able to realise value, or are some actors primarily extracting value without contributing?

Learning and coordination: does the innovation commons system help reduce uncertainty, duplication, or fragmentation? Does it support learning across actors and initiatives?

Relevance and value in use: do the resources address challenges that actually matter to those who use them? Value becomes visible through use, where resources are adopted, adapted, and built upon. Where they are ignored or worked around, that is equally important; frictions and unmet needs are data too.

Governance and stewardship: how do the rules, roles, and decision-making arrangements affect participation, quality, and long-term viability? Is there an organising function maintaining the resource and sustaining the community? Who currently holds responsibility for maintaining the innovation commons resource and community, and is this role sufficiently recognised and supported?

Relational dynamics and legitimacy: how trust, transparency, and reciprocity are built or undermined through the way learning and decisions are handled.

Emergent and unintended effects: what is happening that was not anticipated, exclusions, dependencies, lock-ins, or effects that no one planned for?

Taken together, these lenses do not produce a complete picture of an innovation commons system. They direct attention toward what matters most for sustained development and use, and toward what might otherwise go unnoticed.

These aspects are not treated as separate evaluation dimensions, but as lenses that help interpret signals from practice and relate them to the intended direction of change.

Reflective questions to support learning and judgement

The questions below are organised around the learning orientations introduced above, understanding the current situation, reflecting on intended direction, judging how to bridge gaps, and tracking whether learning travels and sustains engagement over time. They draw on the areas of attention outlined above; different lenses will be more relevant at different stages, and not all questions apply in every context.

They are not checklists, nor are they meant to be answered once. They can be revisited throughout the lifecycle of an innovation commons system and used in whatever settings already exist, team meetings, workshops, governance discussions.

Understanding the current situation and assumptions

- What shared needs or coordination problems is this innovation commons system meant to address?
- Why do we believe a shared resource adds value compared to existing ways of working?
- What existing capacities, relationships, or routines support or limit use and contribution?
- What early signals from practice (including non-use) do we see, and what might they suggest?

Learning in relation to intended direction

- What assumptions about value, use, or contribution are we currently testing?
- What are we learning from actual patterns of use, reuse, and contribution?
- How do these patterns align with where we want ecosystem development to go?
- Which insights suggest that earlier assumptions or priorities may need to change?

Learning that informs how gaps are bridged

- What kinds of decisions could this learning realistically inform?
- What changes in rules, roles, incentives, or practices might help move closer to the intended direction?
- What signals would suggest that the resource should be adapted, paused, scaled, or no longer treated as an innovation commons resource?

Learning that travels across initiatives and contexts

- What insights from this innovation commons system are likely to matter beyond this specific initiative?
- What patterns of use, contribution, or friction appear across different users or settings?
- What has been learned that could help others avoid repeating similar trials or mistakes?
- How is learning currently shared, and where does it tend to stop?
- What would make it easier for others to reuse not only the resource, but also the lessons learned?

Learning that sustains legitimacy, trust, and engagement

- How do people who use and contribute to the innovation commons system hear back about what has been learned?
- Can contributors see how their experiences influence decisions?
- Where does learning flow one way, without feedback going back?
- How does the way learning is shared affect people's willingness to stay involved?
- Whose experiences shape what is seen as valuable, and whose may be overlooked?

Linking innovation commons systems to ecosystem-level outcomes

System-level evaluation does not stop at the boundary of a single initiative. Innovation commons systems exist within broader ecosystems, and what happens inside one (how resources are used, how actors learn, how collaboration develops) has effects that reach beyond its immediate participants. Evaluation can therefore also support reflection on how an innovation commons system contributes to broader ecosystem dynamics.

In particular, evaluation can help assess whether the pooling of distributed information (the mechanism identified by Potts) is enabling new connections, discoveries, or opportunities that would not have been visible to individual actors alone.

That contribution is explored through questions such as these:

- Are innovation journeys becoming more effective or less fragmented for participating actors?
- Do shared resources reduce uncertainty, duplication, or coordination costs in innovation work?
- Do they strengthen actors' capacity for entrepreneurial discovery, experimentation, or collaboration?
- And what ecosystem-level lock-ins, incentives, or routines may be reinforced or challenged through the innovation commons system?
- What capacities exist within the community to observe, document, and interpret what is happening in practice, and where might additional support be needed?

Such questions do not support causal claims; they help situate learning within an innovation commons system within a wider understanding of how systems change over time.

Evaluation as a shared practice

Evaluation in innovation commons systems is not something one actor does to or for the others. It is a shared learning practice in which different actors carry different responsibilities.

For stewards and coordinators of innovation commons systems, evaluation clarifies whether shared resources remain relevant, usable, and maintainable over time, and supports ongoing decisions about direction, priorities, and governance. It also supports the stewardship function: holding the system as a whole, noticing when participation or relevance begins to drift, and initiating adjustments that keep the innovation commons system viable.

For users and contributors, evaluation makes learning visible. When insights from use are fed back, contributors can see how their experiences shape the evolution of the innovation commons system and judge whether continued engagement is worthwhile.

For partner organisations and ecosystem actors, evaluation supports learning across initiatives and contexts. It helps identify what can be reused, adapted, or avoided elsewhere, reducing duplication and strengthening collective capacity.

For funders and policymakers, evaluation informs strategic choices beyond individual projects. Rather than assessing isolated deliverables, it supports an investment logic: when to increase, maintain, redirect, or reduce support based on what is being learned over time.

For evaluators and researchers, the role shifts from auditing to facilitating collective inquiry, helping translate distributed experiences into shared understanding, while remaining attentive to what may be overlooked.

Evaluation in innovation commons systems also depends on the capacity of participants to observe, interpret, and act on signals from practice. Monitoring and evaluation capacity is therefore not limited to technical expertise in methods. It includes the ability to document experience, recognise emerging patterns of use and contribution, and participate in collective interpretation of what those patterns mean. In many innovation ecosystems, such capacities are unevenly distributed: some actors are accustomed to formal evaluation processes, while others contribute primarily through practice-based insights. An effective evaluation practice therefore needs to accommodate different forms of knowledge and ensure that signals from across the community can inform collective learning.

Across all these roles, the value of evaluation lies not in accountability reporting, but in whether learning meaningfully informs decisions, coordination, and shared responsibility for sustaining innovation commons systems.

3.2.3 Testing and application

Both the governance and evaluation frameworks were applied to live communities during the project period. The Demand Acceleration Community, the Visual Impact Community, and the Learning Community for Innovation Commons served as the primary test cases. The process of applying the frameworks shaped them; the frameworks presented in sections 3.2.1 and 3.2.2 are grounded in the practice of these communities, not derived from theory alone.

The evaluation framework was applied through structured surveys and collective sensemaking sessions in the Demand Acceleration Community and the Learning Community for Innovation Commons, producing both substantive findings about the communities and

methodological learning about how evaluation functions (and does not function) in innovation commons contexts.

The governance methods and ideas were developed and tested against three concrete cases: the DA Community, the Visual Impact Community, and the Learning Community for Innovation Commons. As noted in section 2, none of these communities involves commercially sensitive information pooling. The framework has been tested in experience-sharing and pre-competitive contexts; application in more commercially complex settings remains to be explored.

The Demand Acceleration Community: survey evidence

A survey of the DA Community (n=21) was administered in February 2026 and followed by a collective sensemaking session. Key findings:

- 76% have applied DA ideas or working approaches in their own work.
- 57% experienced unexpected positive effects from participation; none reported unexpected negative effects.
- Recommendation score: 4.10/5; continuation likelihood: 3.76/5.
- 67% have shared DA ideas or approaches either internally within their organisation (33%) or with other organisations (33%).
- New collaboration has been initiated or strengthened as a result of participation: 8 respondents with other public organisations, 4 with intermediaries, 3 with suppliers.
- Main barriers to application are time pressure (9), lack of alignment with organisational priorities (7), and limited mandate (6), not lack of relevance or method quality.

The survey also identified areas for continued development: the purpose and governance of the DA Community are not yet sufficiently clear to all participants, and responsibility for shared resources is unevenly understood. These findings informed the treatment of governance design in communities at different stages of maturity in section 3.2.1.

The Visual Impact Community

The Visual Impact project was already underway when this project began, but no predefined model existed for how its results would be disseminated, governed, or sustained over time. What emerged instead was an incremental institutional process in which implementation and governance development became inseparable. The project period thus served not only to develop and test the method in practice, but also to surface the organisational and institutional conditions required for its continued use and further development. Participants were gradually introduced to this perspective and came to recognise The Visual Impact not merely as a project output, but as a shared resource with ongoing stewardship needs.

The original purpose of The Visual Impact was to strengthen incubators' capacity to support startups in articulating, measuring, and visualising societal impact. The immediate result was a more practice-oriented methodology for business developers, including a handbook and supporting tools intended to integrate impact and sustainability more explicitly into business development processes. Within the framework of innovation commons systems, however, the analytical focus shifted from the artefacts themselves to the governance questions they generated. The central issue was no longer only what had been produced, but how a method, its supporting materials, and the knowledge embedded in their use could be maintained as a

coherent and collectively developable resource. In this sense, The Visual Impact became a concrete case of innovation commons governance in practice.

The work proceeded through an initial analysis of The Visual Impact as an innovation commons system, informed by Ostrom's IAD framework. This analysis focused on actors, resources, rules, and possible arenas for coordination, with the aim of clarifying what exactly was being shared and under what conditions collective stewardship might be possible. On that basis, work began on a common charter intended to define purpose, principles, roles, responsibilities, and forms of coordination around continued use and development. In parallel, different licensing alternatives were discussed, particularly possible uses of Creative Commons licences, in order to balance openness and reuse with the need to protect coherence and avoid fragmentation. These questions were particularly important because The Visual Impact was not owned or developed by a single organisation, but had emerged through a distributed network of actors without a formal organisational structure or an established model for compensation and maintenance.

As a consequence, much of the work came to centre on governance rather than methodology in the narrow sense. Discussions focused on stewardship responsibility, decision-making, conditions for new actors to join, and the long-term maintenance of the resource. A key insight was that The Visual Impact should not be understood as a finished method package, but as a shared knowledge asset whose value depends on continued curation, interpretation, and development. The issue was therefore not simply dissemination, but the creation of institutional conditions for continuity.

After the formal project period, the community has continued primarily through recurring meetings and has developed slowly and organically. Over time, its focus has broadened beyond the specific artefacts produced in the original project to the more general question of how impact can be operationalised in practice. In that sense, the community has become broader than the project output itself. At the same time, its continued existence remains strongly dependent on a small number of committed individuals. The challenge going forward is therefore not only to preserve the resource, but to distribute stewardship in ways that make the community less vulnerable to the withdrawal of its current organisers.

3.3 WP3: Piloting a technical infrastructure for innovation commons systems

WP3 explored whether, and under what institutional conditions, digital infrastructure can support innovation commons systems. The work proceeded through three mechanisms: structured market dialogue via a Request for Information (RFI); hands-on development and testing of a Knowledge Manager prototype; and real use of a community platform within a live community context.

The findings of WP3 are documented in full in the companion report *Can Innovation Commons Be Managed Digitally — And Should They Be?* (Wernerheim, Boström, & Lindvall, 2026). The summary below indicates the headline findings; the report itself is the primary artefact.

The RFI process engaged Redpill Linpro, AI-Bees, and Sweco, and functioned as a mechanism for entrepreneurial discovery rather than conventional procurement. The dialogue clarified three recurring design layers that any implementation must reconcile: participation logic and incentives; governance arrangements that enable trust without centralisation; and technical architecture that operationalises governance rules through traceability and licensing conditions. It also pointed toward a more distributed innovation commons system composed of knowledge nodes that exchange domain-specific information through shared institutional infrastructure.

The Knowledge Manager (a retrieval-augmented generation prototype trained on curated Demand Acceleration community materials) functioned most robustly as a cognitive compression and structuring tool, supporting orientation, onboarding, and structured drafting. User trust depended less on technical fluency than on institutional precision: conceptual consistency, metadata discipline, retrieval quality, and clarity of scope. Governance mechanisms were structurally central but only weakly visible in use, and technical deployment did not in itself generate collective action. Observed use was predominantly short, task-oriented, and transactional.

The community platform experience (Mighty Networks) reinforced that innovation commons systems are socio-technical systems. Engagement followed a power-law distribution; facilitation mattered more than features; and administrative efficiency improved significantly. Technology can reduce coordination costs and support collective memory, but sustained innovation commons systems still require stewardship, facilitation, and governance clarity that cannot be automated.

One finding has broader implications: licensing in AI-supported environments. When a Knowledge Manager synthesises responses drawing on multiple documents, attribution to individual sources becomes difficult. This reflects a broader distinction between artefact-level management (where infrastructure handles documents, metadata, traceability, and licensing conditions) and information-object-level governance, which becomes increasingly important when information is synthesised across artefacts.

The overall conclusion of WP3 is that digital infrastructure can contribute to innovation commons systems, but only when treated as part of an institutional infrastructure rather than a standalone technical solution. What constrains the work is not technical feasibility but institutional maturity.

4. Key insights beyond the original scope

The project was designed to test a hypothesis in practice. It also generated an insight that goes beyond its original scope and that we think is worth surfacing here.

4.1 Funding and evaluation instruments are structurally misaligned with discovery-driven work

The pre-study identified two challenges: projectification of funding and misaligned evaluation practices. Through the project, they revealed themselves to be two expressions of the same underlying problem. Both reflect what happens when instruments built on predictive planning are applied to work whose value cannot be predetermined.

Funding instruments that require predefined outcomes undermine the conditions for sustained pooling: actors are incentivised to start new initiatives rather than steward shared resources, and continuity of collective action is systematically underfunded. Evaluation instruments that measure delivery rather than collective learning make it impossible to distinguish a functioning innovation commons system from a project that ticked its boxes. The value that innovation commons systems create (collective, contingent, cumulative) is precisely what these instruments are least equipped to see.

What would different instruments look like? Funding models that allow for staged, hypothesis-driven development, where continued investment is based on what has been learned rather than whether predefined targets have been met. Evaluation practices that ask what is being learned and whether assumptions are holding. This shift is available within existing policy frameworks; it does not require redesigning programmes from scratch, but it does require reconsidering the logic with which the available space is used.

4.2 Further insights from project practice

Four additional insights emerged from the project's work. Each is developed more fully in the specialist contributions in section 3.2, but worth surfacing here as discrete findings.

Governance questions arise from the first interaction. A consistent finding across all three test cases was that assumptions about who can contribute what, under what terms, and what happens to shared material begin to accumulate from the very start. Communities that never surface and codify those assumptions discover their governance failures only when conflict makes them visible, at which point repair is far more costly than design would have been. The implication is that communities need support in designing governance before they feel the need for it, and funders need to treat governance design as a legitimate, fundable activity.

The pooling mechanism is real but requires deliberate stewardship. Potts (2019) observed that innovation commons emerge naturally in the earliest phases around new technologies and dissolve as commercial structures take over. The project asked whether they could be

cultivated deliberately and sustained. The answer from practice is conditional: yes, but only with sustained stewardship, explicit governance, and an organising function that holds the system together. A community that forms is not self-sustaining; it requires ongoing facilitation, curation, and governance attention, and these functions need to be recognised, resourced, and sustained.

Evaluation can be a governance practice, not just a reporting exercise. The evaluation framework, applied to two communities through structured surveys and sensemaking sessions, demonstrated that evaluation can function as a stewardship mechanism: a way of keeping assumptions visible, direction adjustable, and value legible without reducing it to metrics. The sensemaking sessions in both communities produced governance decisions (adjustments to facilitation, reprioritisation of activities, reconsideration of purpose) that would not have happened without structured evaluative attention. This points toward a practice of embedded, ongoing evaluation different in kind from the project-end reporting exercise that most publicly funded innovation work produces.

Technology amplifies what is already there. WP3's most consistent finding was that digital infrastructure does not create conditions for innovation commons governance, it amplifies or undermines conditions that already exist. A knowledge manager built on curated artefacts with strong governance produces practical value; the same technology applied to unstructured, ungoverned material produces noise. A community platform in an active, facilitated community produces visibility and collective memory; the same platform without facilitation produces silence. What determines whether digital infrastructure strengthens or distorts an innovation commons system is the quality of governance arrangements, the capacity for stewardship, and the discipline of metadata and curation.

5. Project outputs

5.1 This final report

This report is itself a project output. It documents what the project did, what it learned, and includes the specialist article by Ia Modin on governance and the specialist framework on evaluation developed by Jenny Iao-Jörgensen. The report is published under open access.

5.2 The WP3 technical report

Can Innovation Commons Be Managed Digitally — And Should They Be? (Wernerheim, Boström, & Lindvall, 2026) is the companion report to this final report. It documents the design, testing, and evaluation of the knowledge manager and community platform, including the RFI market dialogue and findings, the technical architecture of the knowledge manager MVP, evaluation against governance and participation criteria, and the learning from the community platform experience.

5.3 The Learning Community for Innovation Commons

The Learning Community for Innovation Commons (approximately 60 members as of March 2026, hosted on Mighty Networks) is itself a project output: a functioning community of practice that continues beyond the project period. Members are drawn from organisations across the Swedish innovation support system, including science parks (Ideon, Science Park Jönköping, Science Park Gotland, Netport, Kalmar Science Park, Linköping Science Park), business development organisations (Bron Innovation, Bizmaker, Reach for Change, Ignite Sweden), municipalities and regions (Karlstad, Gävle, Lund, Helsingborg, Region Dalarna, Region Stockholm, Region Kalmar, Region Gotland, Region Värmland, Region Västernorrland), universities and research organisations (Göteborg University, Malmö University, Lund University, Mälardalen University, Umeå Innovation, RISE), and a range of intermediaries, consultancies, and practitioners.

5.4 Evaluation instruments and documentation

Structured surveys were developed and administered for both the DA Community and the Learning Community for Innovation Commons, grounded in the evaluation framework presented in section 3.2.2. Each was followed by a collective sensemaking session. The survey instruments and results are available as project documentation.

5.5 Academic publication in preparation

A conference paper by Jenny Iao-Jörgensen and Lina Svensberg, developing the project's evaluation framework into a principles-based model for transformative evaluation in innovation commons–based TIP initiatives, was accepted for presentation at EU-SPRI 2026 in Valencia (June 2026). A journal article building on the paper is in preparation.

6. Continuation and next steps

What this project explored is not a finished body of work but part of something evolving. Members of the project team, the Learning Community for Innovation Commons, and the reference group continue to explore innovation commons in their own contexts: in policy work at national and international levels, in ongoing communities of practice, in research and writing, and in further projects yet to be defined. The Demand Acceleration Community, the Visual Impact Community, and the Learning Community for Innovation Commons themselves continue to operate, together engaging over 400 people across the Swedish innovation support system.

The project's work touches and contributes to several ongoing initiatives, among them the SustainGov programme, the next phase of DigitalWell Arena, the UNECE Team of Specialists on Innovation and Competitiveness Policies, and the conceptual foundation for a new national competence centre for innovation procurement under development at the Swedish Procurement Agency (Upphandlingsmyndigheten). None of this is owned by the project. The project's starting premise — that the most valuable knowledge in innovation work is distributed, fragmented across actors, contexts, and organisations — applies to the project itself. What was assembled here came from many places, intersected with other people and initiatives along the way, and continues to combine with work elsewhere.

Closing seminar. The project's findings are presented and discussed at a closing seminar at UNFOLD Värmland 2026 on 2–4 June 2026 at Värmlands museum, Karlstad. The seminar takes the WP3 report *Can Innovation Commons Be Managed Digitally — And Should They Be?* as its point of departure and opens out to the broader questions of governance, engagement, and stewardship that the project has worked with. The seminar is hybrid and live-streamed; the recording will remain available afterwards.

7. Resources and acknowledgements

The project was led by Lina Svensberg, Innovation Manager, Compare/DigitalWell Arena. The project team included Sara Egidius and Anders Nilsson (Ideon Science Park); Thomas Wernerheim (Karlstad Municipality); Lars Boström, Jakob Lindvall, Jonas Matthing, and Andreas Hager[1] (Compare/DigitalWell Arena).

Ia Modin (IAM Advokatbyrå) and Jenny Iao-Jörgensen (Lund University/Mälardalen University) joined the project team as specialist contributors but became much more than that. Ia developed the ideas on structure and methods for governance presented in section 3.2.1, bringing her expertise in intellectual property law and strategic information asset management, and continued to challenge and sharpen the wider project's thinking throughout. Jenny developed the evaluation framework presented in section 3.2.2 and led the design and administration of the evaluation surveys and sensemaking sessions, and her perspective on learning, complexity, and what evaluation can and cannot do has shaped how the project understands its own work. The project would have been a different and considerably weaker project without them.

Kjell-Håkan Närfelt (Vinnova) has contributed far more to this project than his role as reference group member would suggest: to its conceptual development, its theoretical sharpening, and through endlessly patient and enthusiastic support to the project group.

Jason Potts (Alfaisal University), whose work on innovation commons provides the theoretical foundation this project builds on, came to Karlstad and UNFOLD Värmland already in 2024 and has supported the work ever since. Having him on the reference group, the theorist behind the very concept we set out to test in practice, has been invaluable.

Reference group. The project was supported throughout by a reference group of 20 researchers, policymakers, legal specialists, and practitioners from across Europe and internationally, consulted at three formal meetings and on an ongoing basis: Adrian Smith (University of Sussex), Alex Pazaitis (P2P Lab), Anders Broström (Entreprenörskapsforum), Angelica Jacobo (Region Värmland), Bianca Cavicchi (European Commission), Charlotte Wäreborn (Compare Foundation), Christina Wainikka (Svenskt Näringsliv), Emily Wise (Lund University), Ia Modin (IAM Advokatbyrå), Immanuela Badde (United Nations), Jakob Trischler (Karlstad University), Jason Potts (Alfaisal University), Jenny Iao-Jörgensen (Lund University/Mälardalen University), Jon Mikel Zabala-Iturriagagoitia (University of Deusto), Kjell-Håkan Närfelt (Vinnova), Leonard Kelleher (University of Cambridge), Manuel Laranja (ISEG Lisbon), Mariell Juhlin (SustainGov), Michela Magas (Industry Commons), and Victoria Shaw (Transformative Innovation Policy Consortium).

[1] First half of project.

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