



Illuminating Opportunity in Uncertainty:

Developing a Pipeline for Success

We need better models for identifying, vetting, and moving new opportunities to market to achieve the innovation necessary to transform our industry.

Yet with so many opportunities out there to choose from, it can be overwhelming to identify which options are truly worthy of our investments. Whether they are technological, programmatic, or behavioral, finding new and emerging opportunities can feel like sifting through chaos to arrive at uncertainty. ***Will this investment even work? How will I know? Did I choose the wrong investment in the first place?*** These are nagging and very real questions.

Developing a suite of new opportunities is both possible and manageable. But it requires patience, a clear process, and a little external perspective. In this piece, we step you through ILLUME's process of opportunity identification.

Our process involves five simple steps:

- **Identify Areas of Strategic Priority**
- **Inventory Potential Solutions**
- **Transform Solutions into Offerings**
- **Test Offerings**
- **Scale Market-Viable Offerings**



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Identify Areas of Strategic Priority

As a first step, it is critical to identify the company's area(s) of strategic priority. Like any business, it is important that your investments align with your strategic objectives. For example, if fostering electric vehicle adoption is a strategic priority, then you can feel relatively confident beginning your work in this sphere of potential solutions. In this example, there are innumerable technologies that we might develop, from charging infrastructure to dynamic rates.



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Inventory Potential Solutions

Once we have the areas of strategic priority, the next crucial step is to identify the specific technological, product, and/or service **solutions** in this area that may be of interest or value to your organization.

To determine what might constitute a viable solution, it is critical to conduct both a technical and market assessment of the opportunity. Brainstorming and documenting the factors that you hypothesize will be necessary to deliver this solution and what benefits you expect to gain from your investment.

This includes technical resources, market partners, key delivery channels, internal and external resources, potential customer segments, and potential impact streams (savings, demand reduction, revenue, etc.).

Document these factors and impacts across all solutions of interest. This will help you prioritize which solutions can meet your goals. The more systematic and thoughtful you are in this stage, the more likely you are to identify solutions that will meet your needs. Secondary research support can come in handy at this stage.



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Transform Solutions into Offerings

Next, a **solution** becomes an **offering** when a viable business or program model is established for the solution. Every potential solution, such as electric vehicle charging stations, require many activities and investments to turn them in to a market offering.

In this stage, you must transform your solution into a vision for your offering and enlist the actors who will support you in developing or delivering on it. ILLUME supports our clients in this stage by

helping them with formative research, RFP development, and vendor reviews, as well as providing technical and behavioral subject matter expertise to create the ideal business or program plan. Things to consider include, but are not limited to: the value proposition, funding sources and budgets, target markets and segments, key partners and channels, regulatory limitations or requirements, technical competencies required, cost structures, and desired impact streams (revenue, savings, demand reduction, etc.).

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Test Offerings

Minimum viable offerings then move to the “testing” stage in the form of a field trial or pilot.

These offerings are implemented under controlled and measurable conditions to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to your hypothesized business or program model.

In this stage, it is important to be clear on whether you are running a field trial or a pilot. A field trial is an early-stage test that focuses on a minimum viable offering.

A pilot, in the energy world, is a fully-formed offering. In both cases, it is critically important that your test conditions represent or resemble the market and conditions in which you want to scale this offering. Otherwise, you risk making important business decisions based on unreliable test information. It can be tempting to cherry-pick segments and conditions at this stage to create a case study, but you are setting yourself up for more work (and failure) in the future.

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Scale Market-Viable Offerings

Once you identify and mitigate weakness and threats in the testing stage, you can then scale your offering in market. Scaling always requires a full go-to-market strategy and a viable business or program model that is clearly articulated, measurable, and has trackable outcomes.

In this stage, you also want to set yourself up for evaluation against your program and/or business goals.

This assessment is essential. To demonstrate your success, you will need to ensure that you have the tools, data, and tracking mechanisms in place to demonstrate your impacts. Through careful and ongoing data gathering, you will be able to identify weaknesses, make critical adjustments to your strategy, and determine whether your investment is worth more of your money and time.

Our staged approach is much like design-thinking and entrepreneurial processes. Through these steps, we help you move from an environment of many—often overwhelming—choices to solutions and offerings that have a measurable impact.