

Social Innovation Labs

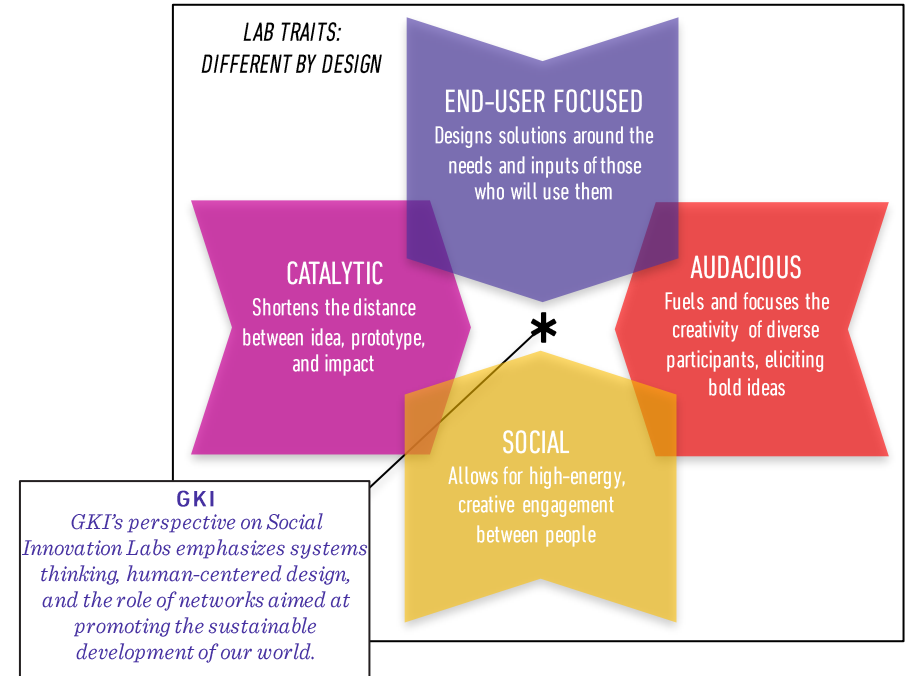
WHAT IS A SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB?

Social Innovation Labs (SILs) are mechanisms for collaboration used to tackle complex problems. SILs pull from a toolbox that includes robust strategy development, operational planning, and design tools and frameworks. Wielding these tools, SILs engage end-users (those who will use developed solutions), experts, and diverse stakeholders. Used in varied settings to address numerous challenges, solutions developed in SILs include off-grid electrification in the rural US and pricing data platforms for fishers and buyers in overfished coastal communities. SILs are particularly suited for those seeking to transform whole systems due to the richness of the outputs produced, the ability to customize the processes used, and the various exciting ways in which to engage different participants.

WHO USES LABS AND WHY?	APPROACH	RESULTS
INDUSTRY	Companies of all sizes use Labs to gain insights into their customers' needs, identify efficiency gains across their operations, and ensure that their business practices incorporate social, environmental, and economic concerns.	From developing innovative products and services to crafting better sourcing and procurement practices, Labs enhance a company's core business goals and community engagement. <i>Example: The Sustainable Food Lab created a greenhouse gas calculator for farmers.</i>
GOVERNMENT	Labs allow governments to create solutions to public policy challenges through academic and field research, direct stakeholder engagement, and the process of rapid experimentation to identify and scale solutions that work.	By engaging stakeholders and casting a wide net to gather insights and potential solutions, Labs improve a government's ability to deliver policies and services that meet society's needs. <i>Example: Boston's New Urban Mechanics Office developed a communal compost collector.</i>
CIVIL SOCIETY	Civil society organizations and actors connect and learn from their beneficiaries, partners, and other stakeholders to develop new, impactful solutions to today's most pressing problems.	Civil society organizations use Labs to access previously unused resources and work with various actors to create solutions that reach those in need. <i>Example: The Innovation Lab Kosovo and UNICEF built mentorship and advocacy programs for Kosovo's youth.</i>

A PATH TO TRANSFORMATIONAL INNOVATION

Too often leaders in government, industry, civil society, and academia try to "innovate" solutions to entrenched social problems using approaches that barely deviate from current practice. SILs bring together previously unlinked fields, thinkers, and ideas to deliver visionary solutions. Such **Transformative Innovation** calls for revolutionizing the "how" and "who" behind collaboration, envisioning future outcomes, and developing and delivering high-impact solutions. GKI believes four characteristics of Social Innovation Labs render these instruments unrivaled in terms of the transformational results they deliver and the methods they employ (see figure below).



Era 1: The Dawn

The first Social Innovation Lab seeks to overcome top-down approaches to solving the world's complex problems

LABS ARE BORN

The Mayo Clinic creates the SPARC Innovation Program as a SIL for health services.

Era 2: Taking Flight

Social Innovation Labs' thought-leaders refine the lab process, and new, diverse labs emerge

LABS MULTIPLY

As Labs grow in popularity, new Labs, like the Sustainable Food Lab, emerge to address challenges in a range of distinct sectors.

Era 3: Results Revolutions

Forward-thinking Social Innovation Labs issue a global call to emphasize results & build Lab ecosystems

GKI & ROCKEFELLER

GKI launches the Food Waste & Spoilage SIL focused on Africa.

A GLOBAL CALL

A Bellagio Convening for top Labs calls for a new focus on results, especially in emerging economies.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF SOCIAL INNOVATION LABS

1988

1992

1996

2000

2004

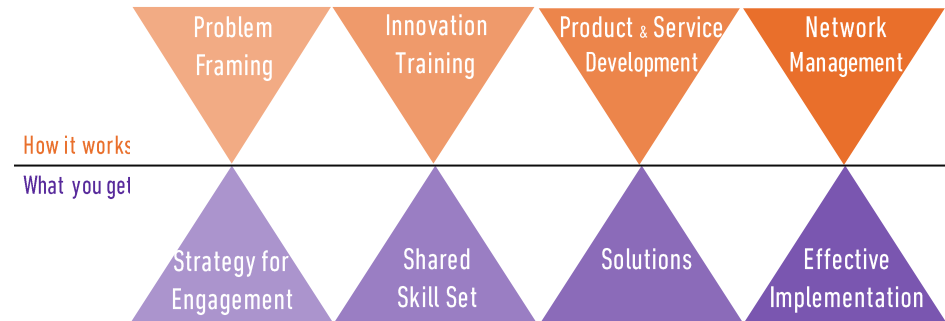
2008

2012

2015

Our Approach to Social Innovation Labs

GKI'S TRANSFORMATIVE INNOVATION LAB APPROACH EMPHASIZES COLLABORATION AND INCLUSIVITY, USING THE COLLECTIVE POWER OF EXPERTS AND END-USERS ALIKE TO DESIGN ACTIONABLE, HIGH-IMPACT SOLUTIONS.



A GKI Social Innovation Lab in Action

WHAT'S AN EXAMPLE OF A GKI SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB?

In 2013, The Rockefeller Foundation named The Global Knowledge Initiative (GKI) as one of its premier Social Innovation Labs. Working within the Food Waste and Spoilage Initiative, GKI employed its Social Innovation Lab process to create possible solutions to address food loss—the loss of edible food at the production, post-harvest, processing, and distribution stages of the value chain. Particularly burdensome for smallholder farmers in Africa, food loss reduces the income of approximately 470 million African farmers and other value chain actors by as much as 15% (The Rockefeller Foundation 2013). Concrete results, unimaginable with other processes, emerged from GKI's [Social Innovation Lab approach](#) as featured in the [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#). GKI's transformative innovation approach brought together a diverse collection of experts and end-users to design actionable food loss solutions.

GKI'S RESULTS

GKI's Food Waste and Spoilage Lab—aimed at the problem of food loss in Africa—offers compelling examples of the kinds of results Labs deliver.

RESULT 1

Framed the food loss problem in 9 countries, with 120 stakeholders engaged, collectively mapping 600 opportunities to reduce food loss

RESULT 2

Delivered a globally-vetted list of 10 food loss reduction opportunities; assessed available resources, which stakeholders used to envision creative solutions

RESULT 3

Convened a talented group of thinkers and doers to craft solutions to the highest-priority opportunities, resulting in the design of 6 prototypes for integrated solutions

RESULT 4

Built networks of committed partners with the required resources needed to implement 6 integrated solutions that tether technology, policy, finance and organizational innovations

RESULT 5

The Rockefeller Foundation is using GKI's insights and solutions from the Social Innovation Lab process to determine how it may support food loss interventions across Africa in the coming years

Innovating the Future with GKI

Whether you are considering construction of a Social Innovation Lab, seeking to learn more about this exciting model, or are hoping to expose yourself and your colleagues to the skills and approaches underpinning Social Innovation Labs, we are here to help. Named one of the world's top 100 social innovations for the next century, GKI enthusiastically embraces opportunities to share our models and methods with others who are passionate about collaborative innovation and development.

Contact us by emailing GKI Chief Operating Officer,
Sara Farley at sara@gkinitiative.org.

Global Knowledge Initiative

Building the Capacity of Social Innovation Labs

OVERVIEW

From climate change, to global post-harvest food loss, to educational inequity in Africa, today's social challenges are more complex, dynamic, and interconnected than ever before. Solving them requires innovative ideas borne of integrated, holistic approaches. In developing innovative solutions to these challenges, The Global Knowledge Initiative (GKI) combines its expertise in innovation systems with a commitment to practical application of human-centered design (HCD) tools. The result is formidable—a comprehensive, participatory innovation design process that enables diverse stakeholders to envision bold, creative solutions to complex challenges and develop the partnerships needed to bring these solutions to scale. **GKI has formalized this design process in our Social Innovation Lab (SIL).**

Since its founding in 2009, GKI has trained entrepreneurs, innovators, and policy makers from 64 countries. Our success in unlocking the potential of Social Innovation Labs as tools for transformative innovation comes from wide-ranging experience. Our approach is grounded in a deep understanding of collaborative innovation, distinctive design philosophy, and skillful application of tools and processes to build an ecosystem for problem solving and innovation. Our transformative Social Innovation Lab process makes GKI a powerful partner for new and existing Labs seeking to deepen their Lab skills.

KEY SKILLS REQUIRED TO RUN A SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB



These essential skills outline the contours of a SIL that delivers impact, unlike Labs whose momentum stops at the conclusion of trainings and workshops. GKI amplifies the potential for SILs to deliver enduring impact by training Lab practitioners, both emerging and seasoned, in the key skills outlined above. Four of these skills are elaborated below:

<h4>FACILITATION</h4>	<h4>COLLABORATIVE INNOVATION</h4>	<h4>HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN</h4>	<h4>NETWORK MANAGEMENT</h4>
<p>Why this skill matters A skilled facilitator can unlock a group's potential to define and solve complex challenges. With facilitation skills, Lab leaders can maintain the enthusiastic participation of diverse individuals who often don't see the world the same way, but whose partnership is essential to achieve success.</p> <p>GKI's experience In partnership with the Uganda National Council for Science and Technology, GKI trained and equipped leaders of several African research networks with the tools to facilitate both meetings and networks. Participants learned to apply facilitation skills to a range of challenges that may arise in convenings.</p>	<p>Why this skill matters Innovation emerges at the intersection of multiple disciplines, triggered by questions, ideation and action. Mastery of collaborative innovation processes enables Lab managers to construct programs that result in clear outcomes, unachievable in absence of Labs. Moving boldly and creatively toward high-impact outcomes demands that Lab practitioners demonstrate strong collaborative innovation skills.</p> <p>GKI's experience Highly adaptive and easily replicable, a Collaboration Colloquium is a Lab instrument that GKI designed to connect potential partners in public and private sectors to mobilize resources and elaborate action plans to deliver innovative solutions.</p>	<p>Why this skill matters Human-centered design is a creative approach to problem solving. It's based on applying a deep empathy with the people you're designing with and for; generating a lot of ideas; building prototypes; sharing what you've made with the people you're designing for; and eventually scaling your innovative new solution in the world.</p> <p>GKI's experience The GKI team applied HCD principles to develop a series of trainings with students, policy makers and private sector leaders in Malaysia, paving the way for strong public-private partnerships to address challenges in rice paddy production, and eco-tourism.</p>	<p>Why this skill matters Asymmetries in access to financial and knowledge resources impede emergence and growth of innovative and high-impact solutions to complex problems. Designing and managing networks that bring together diverse actors to facilitate collective action toward a shared goal is critical for solving problems and scaling solutions effectively.</p> <p>GKI's experience Through our signature LINK program, GKI trains network stakeholders and managers in network design, management, and evaluation skills in an effort to advance solutions to socio-economic development challenges in Rwanda, Uganda, South Africa, Kenya, Afghanistan, and Pakistan.</p>

SEEKING TO AMPLIFY YOUR IMPACT?

GKI delivers customized services to clients operating Social Innovation Labs — from early stage to advanced operations — seeking to deepen their impact. We design our offerings for each partner to meet their needs and vision for transformational change.

GKI'S LAB TRAINING OPTIONS	<h4>One-Day Training</h4> <p>A concentrated immersion in 4 Lab key-skills</p>	<h4>Multi-Day Training</h4> <p>An immersive bootcamp in a complete range of Lab skills</p>	<h4>Peer-to-peer consulting</h4> <p>Support & collaboration in live Lab settings</p>	<h4>Mentoring</h4> <p>On-going feedback and support to Lab managers</p>
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