



Global Knowledge Initiative

Systems Innovation Toolkit:

An Interactive Learning Journey

GKI's Systems Innovation program is designed for local insights and leadership to emerge over time all while building new capacities and networks for solution acceleration. Our programs pull together systems-thinking and innovation thinking in hope of activating a network to strengthen the ecosystem for local innovation, incentivizing organizations and intermediaries to design and deploy solutions and build cross-sector connections and collaborations that lead to systems-level changes.

Version: Overview



The Systems Worldview

Our world is not predictable or linear, it is emergent, interconnected, and complex. Whether it's an organizational system, a government system, the food system, or our planetary system, systems shape our lives in ways we might not even realize. We also shape them. Our decisions can ensure that the systems we are part of are more resilient and able to address the complex challenges embedded within them, but first, we must understand what systems are, how they operate, and where the opportunities are to change them for the better.



The Innovation Worldview

Innovation is not only novel ideas or concepts. It is also a disruptive force for change in the world. It is a deliberate process of experimentation, learning, and (re) design; all in an effort to unlock new value and improved outcomes for people, society, and our planet. It takes a particular mindset and skill set to effectively translate ideas into innovation, and achieve a level of impact that can disrupt the status quo. With the right opportunities, incentives, and support structures, we can catalyze and accelerate the innovations we need to disrupt systems that no longer serve us.



The Systems Innovation Hybrid

Systems need innovations to build momentum for change. Innovations need to be strategically placed within systems to be locally relevant, more transformative, and better positioned for scale. Both need the vision, creativity, and energy of people to build momentum for change.

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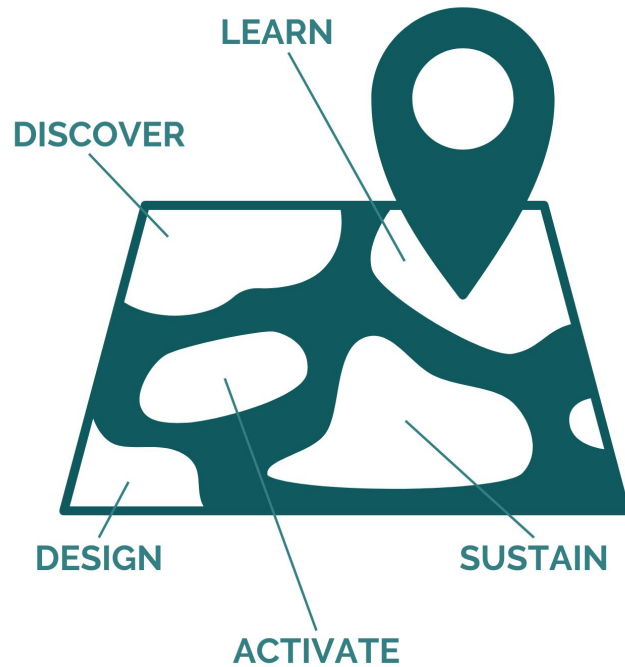
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Welcome to the Interactive Learning Journey!



Experience our Systems Innovation methodology – alongside our learnings, examples of what these tools looked like in practice in a local context – and remix it for your own initiatives to address the needs of any complex system and diverse set of challenges around the world.

Imagine the potential for impact when you can focus the insights, ingenuity and action of the innovation ecosystem in your community towards solving the most pressing problems of your community. Grab your packs and get ready to learn!



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The Discover Phase is an exciting time where you get to engage with stakeholders and better understand their current and future systems. By thoughtfully recruiting the right stakeholders, you can gain valuable insights into their experiences, identify gaps and opportunities, and leverage available resources for creating positive change. With the right people on board, you can design solutions tailored to the ecosystem's unique challenges, taking into account multiple systems and how they interact with each other. By truly understanding the dynamics of these systems, you can identify ripe opportunities for innovation and change, unpack the enablers and barriers in the innovation ecosystem, and create a call to action that activates stakeholders to respond with new, effective solutions. This collaborative approach ensures that you foster systemic transformation that benefits everyone – especially local innovators and vulnerable communities. So let's get started and discover the exciting possibilities that lie ahead!



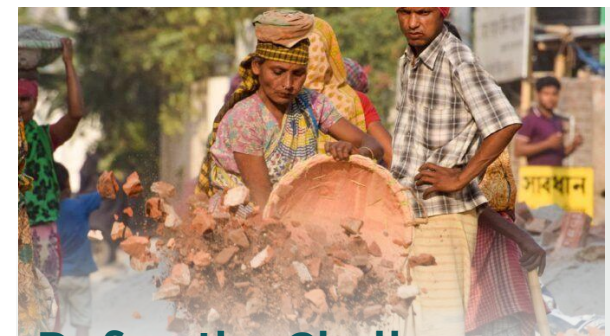
Recruit the Network>>

You need a clear understanding of the system for innovation to take place. To do that, we're going to need to talk to the right people.



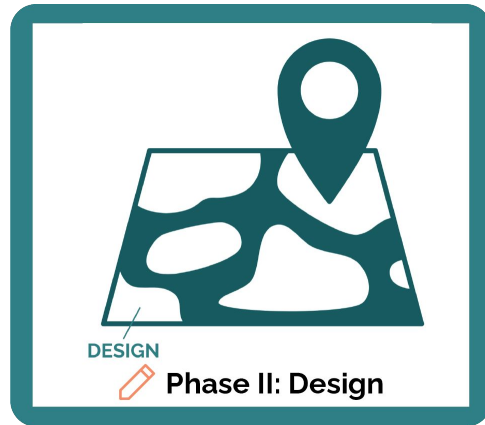
Map the System >>

Next, your goal is to create a better-shared understanding of the system, particularly where change is possible and where efforts have the most impact.



Define the Challenge>>

With more insights into the system, you can now select areas of focus and co-create the challenge or problem statements where you'd like to see innovation.



In this phase, the network will co-create solutions for changing the system. After thoughtfully recruiting the right network and mapping the system, you have identified opportunities for innovation, the leverage points where you should focus, and the collaboration you need to foster systemic transformation. Next, it's up to a core team to design an open innovation challenge program and launch the challenge. Challenge participants will then co-create solutions for systems change.



Design a challenge competition to address opportunities for change across a system and leads to systems-informed solutions.



It's "Go" time! Launch the challenge, field solutions, and choose participants.



Challenge participants co-create solutions that can impact the system.



In this phase, challenge participants should receive resources to develop further and test their systems-informed solutions. These resources might include:

- design and prototyping support
- mentorship from coaches and advisors
- matchmaking sessions with partners
- seed funding

Participants should demonstrate progress in their solutions before competing at a challenge event.



Once solutions have been co-designed, participants can use assumption mapping, prototyping, and testing to improve and de-risk solutions.



It's time to showcase progress and choose winners.



In the Sustain phase, our goal is to ensure the ongoing success and lasting impact of the network that we've built. We want the ecosystem to continue working together in a self-governing and sustainable way. By staying engaged with the network, we can establish new partnerships, keep advancing the solutions we've championed, and share information and resources with more people – All essential steps for creating real change in the system.

It's essential to set up a network structure to keep momentum going. This structure provides a platform for the most committed and ready champions to work together toward systems change. They can coordinate the necessary resources and skills to ensure long-term success and growth. This sustainable approach allows the network to drive lasting change, adapt to challenges, and transform the system over time.



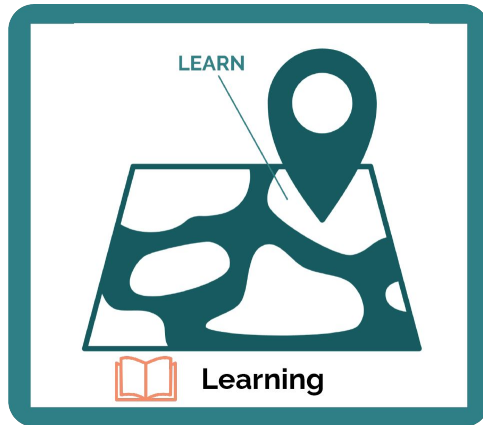
After completing the preceding phases, you should have a substantial network of stakeholders with a shared understanding of the challenges and opportunities within the system.



Choosing the right modalities for the network is crucial for effective collaboration and sustained engagement. Modalities refer to the network governance, structure, and platforms through which the network operates.



As the project progresses, it's important to develop valuable resources that enable the network leaders and members to operate without the deep guidance of outside advisors.



Innovation and systems change requires an adaptive management approach to programs. Your Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning plan must:

- Prioritize ongoing learning and adaptation over end-of-project measurements.
- Rely on methods suitable for experimentation and non-linear learning and regular adaption of plans, strategies, and technical approaches.
- Incorporate consistent reflection and insight into decision-making for future interventions.
- Employ participatory approaches to engage key stakeholders throughout the entire process.

Traditional monitoring and evaluation (M&E) approaches can be challenging when applied to innovative projects or systemic changes for several reasons:

1. Uncertainty and unpredictability

Most usually characterize innovations or system changes with high uncertainty and unpredictability. Traditional M&E relies on predefined indicators, specific goals, and precise trajectories. In contrast, innovative projects often involve exploration, adaptability, and learning, making outcomes hard to predict.

2. Non-linearity

Traditional M&E methods often assume a linear pathway from inputs to outputs to outcomes, while systems change and innovation are inherently non-linear. They involve trying different approaches, learning from failures, and iterating on ideas. Identifying direct causal relationships and measuring impacts using conventional methods can be tricky.

3. Dynamic and complex environment

The environment in which innovation or systems change occurs is dynamic and complex. Change in one area can lead to unexpected consequences in others, and isolating the impact of a specific intervention from other factors can be challenging.

4. Long-term impacts

The impact of innovations or system changes often takes a long time to manifest and can be challenging to capture within the typical timelines of M&E cycles.

5. Risk of failure

Innovations and systems change efforts involve a higher risk of failure as they try something new or complex. Traditional M&E methods may not account for this risk and may view failures negatively rather than as opportunities for learning and improvement.

6. Qualitative aspects

Innovations and system changes often bring about qualitative changes that are not always effectively captured by the quantitative measures used in traditional M&E. For example, changes in an organization's culture or the level of collaboration among stakeholders might be crucial outcomes of an innovation challenge but are difficult to measure with standard indicators.

For these reasons, monitoring and evaluating innovation or systems changes requires a more flexible and adaptive approach to deal with ambiguity, complexity, and uncertainty and capture quantitative and qualitative changes.

Go to our website for more information on **Learn** and forming a theory of change, possible indicators to consider, pause & reflect, and other monitoring, evaluation, and learning (MEL) methods:

<https://bit.ly/systemsinnovationtoolkit>

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