

Social Innovation Labs

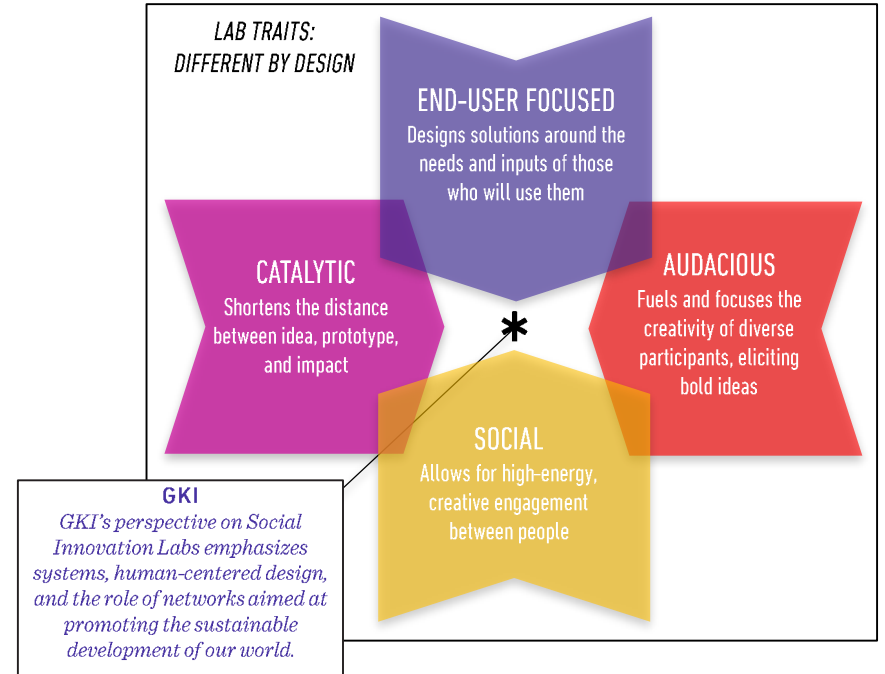
WHAT IS A SOCIAL INNOVATION LAB?

Social Innovation Labs (SILs) are platforms for collaboration used to tackle particularly complex problems. SILs pull from a toolbox that includes robust strategy, 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, SIL solutions include off-grid electrification in the rural US and pricing data platforms for fishers and buyers in overfished coastal communities. The ability to customize SILs in terms of processes used, how SILs engage different end users, how they are implemented, and outputs produced, makes SILs particularly suited for those seeking to transform whole systems.

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 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 engagement in the community. Example: The Sustainable Food Lab created a greenhouse gas calculator for farmers.
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. Example: Boston's New Urban Mechanics Office developed a communal compost collector.
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. Example: The Innovation Lab Kosovo and UNICEF built mentorship and advocacy programs for Kosovo's youth.

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 domains.

Era 3: Results Revolutions

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

LABS REFINE

Lab experts review successful labs and recognize a need for enhanced user-focused design.

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

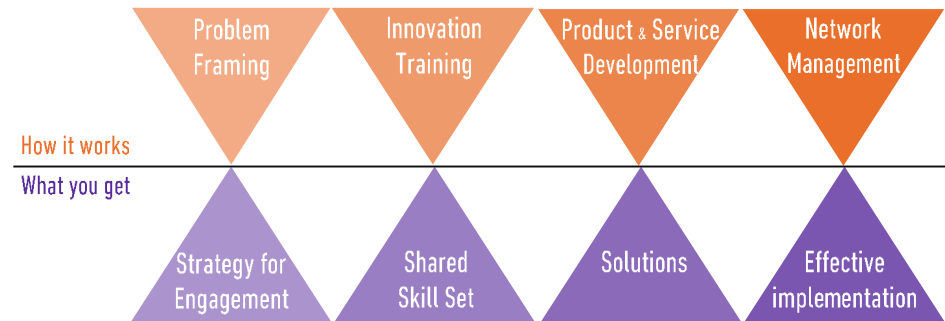
2008

2012

2015

Our Approach to Social Innovation Labs

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



GKI'S RESULTS

GKI's 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

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](#). GKI's transformative innovation approach, as encapsulated in our [Social Innovation Lab for the Food Waste and Spoilage Initiative](#) and featured in the [Stanford Social Innovation Review](#), brought together a diverse collection of experts and end-users to design actionable food loss solutions.

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,
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