



— Social Innovation Labs —

Solving complex challenges for Australia's future

A specialised framework by



What are Social Innovation Labs?

Our 21st Century world is making rapid advances in relation to scientific and technological challenges. However, many complex societal issues persist with little progress.

Social innovation labs seek to create the space for diverse stakeholders to convene around complex societal challenges and to rapidly prototype and develop new solutions.

Australian Futures Project is a not-for-profit that specialises in convening Social Innovation Labs on issues relevant to Australia. Our Social Innovation Labs build on existing practice with a unique process that unlocks systems change. We have combined cutting-edge techniques from change management, innovation theory, systems thinking, and product and service design.



What do Social Innovation Labs do?

Our Social Innovation Labs take a different approach from typical policy, advocacy, or grant-based approaches to solving complex challenges. They:

1

Foster **collaboration** between actors in the challenge space

2

Get to the **root cause** of the challenge – not the just symptoms

3


Use experimentation to test and then deliver **successful cross-disciplinary responses/solutions** to the challenge

How does that happen?

Australian Futures Project has developed a bespoke framework that can be adapted to address a variety of social challenges. Components include:

FRAMEWORK	WHAT OCCURS	TOOLS USED
 Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Developing buy-in from key stakeholders• Co-designing the Social Innovation Lab program with these stakeholders• Recruiting committed and talented individuals with deep experience in the challenge area to participate, by application and invitation• Establishing the authorising environment for the participants to collaborate and experiment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish an experienced and dedicated Steering Committee• Co-design• Collaborative facilitation and engagement• Theory U
 Getting to the root cause of the challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Using a system perspective, determining the root causes of the challenge• Establishing cross-disciplinary teams to collaborate and experiment to develop responses to the challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Systems mapping• Collaboration techniques• Challenges statements• Individual working style• Team roles and formation
 Experimentation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identifying the opportunities to respond to the challenge• Iterative Response/Solution Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ideation• User centred design• Rapid prototyping• User testing• Evaluation

What does this result in?

FRAMEWORK	WHAT OCCURS	TOOLS USED
 <p>Delivering outcomes to the challenge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Idea incubation Pitching responses/ solutions to senior stakeholders in the challenge system creating pathways to take these through to delivery 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Business model development Pitching and communication skills Developing stakeholder buy-in Brokering connections with influencers and supporters Leadership skills



Delivery

A Social Innovation Lab is supported by a sponsor who: determines the broad societal challenge the Lab will focus on; provides co-design input; identifies key stakeholders and contacts with support from Australian Futures Project; and provides funding. As a collaborative and open-source approach, typically the participants rather than the sponsor retains ownership of the solutions designed during the Social Innovation Lab.

Sponsors can choose to support one or more of the ideas being brought to life. Social Innovation Labs can have multiple sponsors.

The Social Innovation Lab is a dynamic process that can take 3-18 months depending on the requirements of the sponsor and participants. The process includes preparatory work and co-design before commencing participant engagement. The participant experience includes facilitated workshops, including retreats, and ongoing coaching.



Australian Futures Project: Results to date

The Australian Futures Project team has deep experience in facilitating cross-sectoral processes dealing with complex challenges. This includes supporting almost 100 Australians to deliver results for the early childhood sector across Australia and the agricultural sector in New South Wales. The Australian Futures Project staff have worked extensively on similar processes with the United Nations, World Bank, World Economic Forum, national governments, and community organisations.



"I have really taken a lot from the process, the networking and idea flow has been great. But most of all the process to break apart hard issues and reconstruct them with no preconceived ideas has been great, particularly in a group so large. I will use this process again and again when working through challenging problems with no clear solution."

– Actions for NSW Agriculture Participant

"This has been a great growing experience personally and also some amazing initiatives and partnerships have been formed, that I have watched grow - not necessarily just my own - that will be of benefit to Australian agriculture. This could quite possibly have been a seminal moment in my life and career."

– Actions for NSW Agriculture Participant

Case study: Actions for NSW Agriculture

CHALLENGE FOCUS

- Increase capital investment across the agricultural supply chain
- Foster a culture of innovation across the agricultural supply chain
- Improve the level of community trust in the agriculture industry

INPUTS

- \$350,000
- 60 cross sector participants from all over NSW
- Steering committee comprised of 9 industry leaders
- Ongoing engagement from supporters including: Vincent Fairfax Family Foundation – primary supporter, Wilson Fletcher, NSW Department of Primary Industries, Incitec Pivot & PwC

OUTPUTS

- 10-month participant program
- Three in-person workshops for a total of six days
- Ongoing coaching online and via teleconference
- Pitch rehearsals and training
- A final pitch event for participants to pitch their solutions to government, philanthropy, investors and industry for support

OUTCOMES

- Addressing the root challenge: 11 solutions developed in response to the challenges
- Improved collaboration: 95% of respondents plan to stay in contact with participants that they had never met before the process and 67% stated that these new connections have already resulted in their involvement in projects outside the program
- Improved leadership capabilities: 86% of respondents of participants felt more confident in their ability to provide leadership in the agricultural sector



Contact us

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