



This project focuses on the significant change that is impacting the civil society/ NGO sector (e.g. changing demographics and role of youth, virtual connectedness, etc..) and developing new operational initiatives to address the challenges these changes pose to the relevance and effectiveness of established organizations in the field. Operating as an innovative social lab, the project will (1) develop and test new ways of operating that can be used by any civil society organization looking at how to adapt their organizational operations to address these changes; and (2) evaluate and share the learning as widely as possible in the global civil society community.

**GOAL** Developing and testing new ways of operating for organizations looking at how to adapt and change to stay relevant and effective.

#### PROJECT OUTLINE

The Civil Society and Testing Change project is a global multi-year, multi-stakeholder, multi-generational and cross-issue project to identify and test some new operational approaches for NGOs/civil society organizations to stay relevant in their field. The project

-  operates as a social lab to help test and practice innovative approaches.
-  is designed to connect and bridge existing structures and efforts.
-  simulates the ecosystem in which organizations operate through taking on a holistic and cross-issue approach.
-  is multi-year to learn while we are testing, iterating solutions within and beyond the peer-group and further share what has been learned through implementation.

#### **SOCIAL LAB**

A social lab aims to model the constraints of the ecosystem in which solutions to problems will have to survive. By including diverse actors in an open process of prototyping and testing, it is quick & effective in creating viable & tailored solutions.

#### HOW WE OPERATE

A Steering group and project manager initiate working groups by identifying (i) an area that appears to need attention (validated by research and a roundtable of those involved in the issue area) and (ii) a lead organization/network directly engaged in the identified area. The steering group and project manager provide linkage and synergy among groups for shared cross-issue learning. Working groups are made up of practitioners from diverse perspectives, geographic areas and sectors. Their initial role is to generate ideas for the lead organization and to foster iteration within and beyond global peer networks. Ideas are directly tested within the lead organization in a process of continuous exchange of ideas and learning with the peer group/working group.

The initial profile for groups who may find this community most valuable is: approximately 10-30 years old, medium sized, with a leadership committed to staying innovative, and enough staff capacity to try new things.

## PROGRESS THUS FAR

The Steering Group identified 'sustained youth engagement in all parts of the organization' as a crucial factor for a civil society organization's success. The lead group for this first working group is **CIVICUS**, which is building on existing efforts to incorporate youth into the organization's operations. The virtual working group developed ideas for CIVICUS, one of which has now entered the testing phase. A second working group led by **GlobalGiving** has focused on **impact assessment**. A new focus on leadership approaches through organizational change is being initiated led by Mobilisation Lab and Akili Dada. To keep a dynamic ecosystem (rather than issue specific) focus, working groups will be added over time.

## TARGETED RESULTS

We are targeting at the end of the multi-year testing period to have accessible 'field' (organizational) and peer group tested ideas for changes civil society organizations/ NGOs can make to improve their operations in significant ways. Besides building a strong community of collaboration, we also aim to build an accessible online platform to gather resources and promote exchange.

Additional information on the project can be [found here](#).

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