

# What is a Social Innovation Lab?

In short, a social innovation lab is a platform that allows people with a shared purpose to come together to develop ideas and projects, in particular those that they cannot do alone.

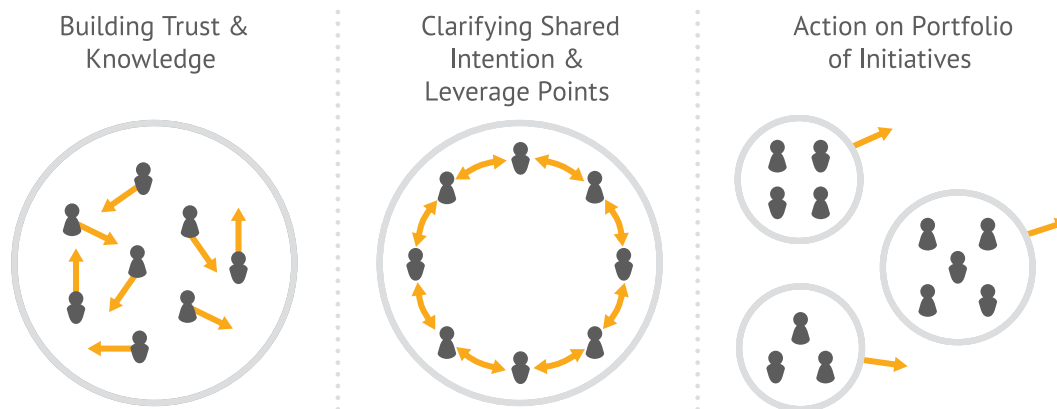
They are often designed around a challenging issue that no single organization can address on their own and that requires a novel and coordinated approach between many organizations. Examples of these types of issues include poverty reduction, watershed management and, in the case of the Nest Lab, climate change.

A social innovation lab does not solely rely on experts to source ideas, but rather are rooted in the trust that community members can and will effectively engage on important complex issues to develop new solutions that align with their shared values and interests.

These labs are platforms for people to work together over time, and are distinct from a workshop or a planning process, which has a start and end. Lab processes can extend for months or years through multiple iterations as participants test new ideas, learn, adapt and then iterate new ideas.

An effective social innovation lab platform developed requires:

- **A Safe Container:**  
A space and processes for participants to build relationships and feel comfortable to share and develop new ideas together.
- **A Backbone Organization:**  
An organization with the capacity to provide logistical, administrative and facilitation support to enable effective collaboration.
- **A Shared Intention:**  
A collaborative articulation of the greater contribution that the group wants to work together to make.
- **A Portfolio of Initiatives:** A suite of collaborative activities, prototypes and experiments that allow for the testing and elevation of the most promising ideas.



Adapted from original from REOS Partners



## Resources

- » Rockefeller Foundation, Social Innovation Lab Guide [Video](#) | [Download](#)
- » Skills Society, Shift Lab on Racism [Website](#) | [Tools](#)
- » Energy Futures Lab (Natural Step Canada) [Video](#) | [Website](#)
- » Sustainability Transition Labs (Natural Step Canada) [Website](#)
- » Reos Partners, Change Labs [Website](#)
- » Social Labs Revolution [Book](#) | [Blog](#)
- » Social Innovation Lab Field Guide [Download](#)