



Making citizen solutions work

The civic innovation labs method



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Prologue

Andrés Allamand

IBERO-AMERICAN SECRETARY-GENERAL

The history of the Civic innovation Labs (LABIC) demonstrates what can happen when people are given the means and support to develop their own strategies to solve their problems. The result of this experience is such that, beyond its obvious successes, reveals the power of creativity, perseverance, and teamwork.

The LABIC were born in 2014 as a space where people from every corner of Iberoamerica could propose specific and innovative solutions to their communities' problems. Over the last eight years, this model has produced almost a hundred high impact ideas.

While it would not be possible to present all of them in this brief introduction, we feel it's important to highlight some of the LABIC initiatives that had a definite positive result in the quality of life of some communities. For example, there's the "*Aetrap Project*", that allows communities to monitor through an application on their phones the outbreaks of the Aedes mosquito, responsible for the spread of the Zika, Dengue and Chikungunya viruses; or the "*Comarca Project*", that helped keep alive the Wounaan language of native peoples of Colombia and Panama by digitising it and developing a keyboard to type in it; or the "*Elevaciones Project*" which allowed children with cerebral palsy to have access to wheel chairs with a standing function at a cost 20 times lower than other market alternatives.

Even though the themes of the projects have been remarkably diverse, there is a common thread in them which is the distinctive stamp of the Iberoamerican cooperation: there is no



vertical hierarchy where the answers only come from the top. Every one of the LABIC solutions emerges from the affected communities and are perfected and make reality through the collaboration of the different participants in a completely horizontal system.

Among the parties involved in the Labs over the years there are more than a hundred public institutions that -through direct contact with the entrepreneurs- have come to understand the needs of the communities and engaged with them using a format that is flexible and agile, and that allows them to connect with their citizens encouraging them to take part in other processes.

At a time of personal and institutional mistrust in the region, the LABIC bring a space of direct interaction between communities and administrations, facilitating the build-up of trust, a fundamental pillar to confront the serious challenges ahead.

These Labs have taught us that in order to find successful solutions our innovation concept needs to go further than being just a process of trial and error. We must understand innovation as a methodology of experimentation and teamwork that is open, horizontal, and inclusive, and contributes to creating effective answers.

And that is precisely why at SEGIB we want to tell this story. Our firm conviction is that through the LABIC, Iberoamerica offers the world a new contemporary method of innovation capable of producing concrete results while promoting citizens' participation and building trust. This pioneering Iberoamerican proposal also connects public institutions to civic society and promotes the emergence of communities that are initiative-taking, engaged and committed to tackle the collective challenges we all are facing.

As the title of this book suggests, the history of the LABIC is the history of citizen's solutions that work. And it also is a story based on many other stories that deserved to be known.



“...the most tangible pacesetters of a new form of cooperation that is open and horizontal.”

Myriam Ferran

DEPUTY DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIPS, EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The cooperation between the European Union and Latin America is paving the way for a redevelopment of international partnerships. Together we are leading the way towards innovative ways of working in a region that is filled with talent and collaboration opportunities.

In this context lie the Civic Innovation Labs (LABIC) as one of the most tangible pacesetters of a new form of cooperation that is open and horizontal.

Since 2019 we support the LABIC as collaborative spaces of citizen’s participation which aim at sharing knowledge, ideas, and experiences in order to generate projects that make possible to propose and experiment solutions which then will contribute to improving a variety of problem situations.

The LABIC make the citizens the key players in finding answers to complex and cross-sectional challenges such as climate change, economic opportunities, gender equality, accessibility for people with mobility issues or the inclusion of vulnerable populations, among others.

The initiatives promoted by the LABIC and that are currently being implemented in different Latin American countries emanate from citizens that are sensitive, motivated, and committed, and who are doing an important service to the progress of society, changing the status quo, and generating new opportunities of employment, growth, and equality.

The European Commission considers the LABIC experience important and innovative, and thinks it is right that it should be divulged to other areas and countries. Taking this into consideration and being true to our commitment of making knowledge



accessible and inviting reflection and participation from all, we share the LABIC method in this publication.

“They procure answers to concrete problems”

Laura Oroz

AECID COOPERATION DIRECTOR FOR LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBE

The Iberoamerican General Secretariat succeeded in 2014 when it launched the Civic innovation labs (LABIC) method.

Since then, the concept of innovation for development has been gaining strength in the Ibero-American region.

In April 2021, the XXVII Ibero-American Summit was held in Andorra under the theme “Innovation for sustainable development- Objective 2030. Iberoamerica tackling the challenge of Coronavirus”.

Thanks to the joint effort of the nations attending the Andorra Summit, today we have important documents to use as a reference such as *The Andorra commitment for innovation in sustainable development* and the *Iberoamerican strategy for Innovation*, both of which will serve as a guide in the arduous task of promoting change in a complex world.

The SEGIB’s LABIC have become an international pacesetter at empowering the communities to participate directly in their own development. They are a success story because they procure answers to concrete problems with context-specific approaches while promoting the collective intelligence and guaranteeing shared and permanent knowledge.

This was the spirit that forged the Iberoamerican Cooperation, inspired by the principles of South-South cooperation, and triangular in which horizontality plays a crucial role.



“Iberoamerica can contribute decisively to a process of regenerative disruption”, notes the strategy document mentioned above. In order to achieve this, the innovation process must respect some guiding principles: responsible innovation, that is to say innovation that is reflective, inclusive, receptive to evolving values, and anticipatory of the consequences of innovation; open innovation, that promotes the active participation of external actors in the creative processes; and innovation in and from the Public sector, which requires the development of a Public system of innovation that includes stronger state institutions that are more opened and interconnected.

The LABIC method is a precious step in this complex task that we are sharing. Let’s take this opportunity to learn from their experience.



Introduction

A Civic Innovation Lab (known in Spanish as a LABIC) is a method to experiment, to collaborate and to expedite¹ innovative projects emerging from communities of citizens with the potential to be transformed into useful viable solutions to different social, cultural, environmental, or economic challenges.

Many institutions and organizations find that the LABIC are a tested and systematic instrument that allows collective intelligence to flourish, offering communities the possibility to generate agile changes rooted in their own contexts.

The LABIC present a model where instead of some experts from an institution bringing random solutions to the communities, it is the people of the community gathered in the lab who come up with the innovative answers for themselves. The LABIC bring together people with a variety of experiences and knowledge to -for the first time in most cases-, create, promote, and speed up useful, attainable² and replicable³ solutions.

The Civic Innovation Project led by the Iberomeric General Secretariat (called SEGIB in Spanish) launched the LABIC in 2014. Since then, LABIC have travelled to different countries

(1) With 'expediting' the projects we mean to push projects or ideas put forward by people so that they develop quicker and better than they would have done without the LABIC help.

(2) Attainable means that the resulting product should achieve a reasonable price and be easy to understand.

(3) The projects should be replicable in different contexts.

and cities, improving, and innovating their method every time to adapt it to local, national, and international settings.

During the Veracruz Heads of State and government summit (Mexico, 2014), SEGIB promoted for the first time in this type of summits a space for the communities to lead the solutions. The first international LABIC was launched with the participation of a hundred citizens with the objective of collaborating and working together for the common good of the region⁴.

This first experience clearly proved that the LABIC are competent tools to promote citizens participation and innovative solutions. A collaboration that is non-competitive, sustainable, inclusive, and furthermore, developed by the same people affected by the problems or challenges that need to be tackled.

Since then, the LABIC have encouraged innovative processes in more than a hundred institutions in Iberoamerica⁵, They have produced almost a hundred different solutions generated in several countries and replicated them in many more, with the participation of more than a thousand people. So, now, eight years later, in 2022, LABIC have consolidated as one of the most challenging innovative models in the area of development cooperation⁶.

LABIC have generated durable changes in a variety of fields: environment, gender equality, post-conflict issues, social inclusion, cultural entrepreneurship, and many more.

As this document will establish, the LABIC have not only provided innovation in the field of development cooperation, but they have

(4) At the beginning inspired by methodologies developed by: Medialab-Prado (Spain), as well as experiences of Nuvem (Brazil) and MindLab (Denmark), among others.

(5) From its inception in 2014, the LABIC have been supported by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation (AECID) as an innovative cooperation method born in the Iberoamerican region.

(6) Recognised as that in 2019 by the Directorate General for International Partnerships (DG-INTPA) of the European Commission and for the United Nations commission of experts in Public Administration in 2018.

also instigated significant changes in the whole sector of citizens labs, in particular in areas related to community work, facilitating new communication strategies, merging ancestral, digital, and social technologies, and coming up with new methodology to evaluate and monitor the prototypes created.

Faithful to the principles of civic innovation, this document aims at sharing a comprehensive view of the LABIC for the purpose of helping any organisation involved in programmes destined to improve the life of communities facing challenges all over the World.

Next, we will describe in detail the two phases of our method: Phase 1, where we include the preparations involved in creating the prototype⁷, and Phase 2, in which we'll produce a new way of developing (we call it maturing) the prototypes⁸.

The LABIC democratises innovation by proving that innovation doesn't have to stem necessarily from a solitary process or depend entirely on experts and that it doesn't have to be an expensive practise either. The LABIC demonstrates that innovation can be learnt and promoted.

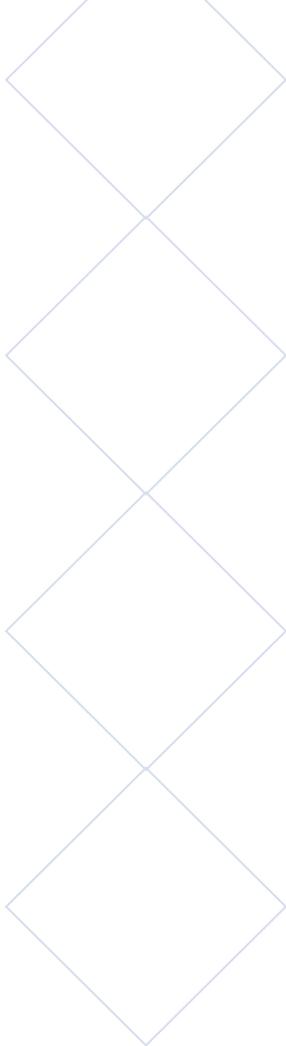
(7) A prototype is a first or preliminary version of a product that allows us to verify the design and confirm that it fulfils the needs and specifications of the final product.

(8) The design and launch of the maturity phase have been possible thanks to the support of the DG-INTPA.



Core principles of the LABIC





International, national, and local organisations, citizens from different countries, communities and collectives, projects with innovative proposals, ancestral and digital technologies, replicable prototypes, free licences. All of it in just one model. A method that makes the LABIC a referent in innovation and people's participation, a model that brings the communities to the international cooperation field, not only as recipients of resources but as creators of their own solutions.

The five principles that guide the LABIC are: open knowledge, attainable solutions, experimentation, collaboration, and caregiving.

Open knowledge

We consider that the main priority in civic innovation, is to share the results universally and free of cost, be it through open repositories⁹ or through free licences¹⁰. In the LABIC, knowledge is a common asset that must be democratised and

(9) A repository is a digital file that contains comprehensive information that can be accessed by anyone without any restrictions.

(10) The open licenses are permitted by the authors who waived their legal rights under certain conditions so that user can use or distribute their copyright materials. For example, Creative Commons o GPL.

“the LABIC provide enormous innovation opportunities to institutions at a very low cost and all of them devised by normal citizens”.

must be made to circulate and be available to anyone who might need it. It is vital that a vast majority of people and communities benefit from the creative processes that our method offers. Each solution provided by our labs is released through free licences, completed with all the documentation about formats and production systems.

Attainable solutions

The products or prototypes developed in a LABIC are functional, simple, affordable -no more than 300 euros-, and can be replicated anywhere in the World because all the information about the creative process is made available free of charge in the cloud. In the context of the labs, the working teams created to develop the projects keep in touch after the labs ends which means that this model not only produces tangible solutions/products but helps nurture small communities and create networks between groups of people that might not have had the opportunity to meet otherwise and to work together for the common good. We can safely say that the LABIC provide enormous innovation opportunities to institutions at a very low cost and all of them devised by normal citizens.

Experimentation

To innovate, you must experiment. So, to generate any important change in societies, environment, culture, or public administration, you also must experiment. But innovation is not a linear process in which you know the results in advance. It's more of a process of investigation and experimentation, where you reach findings that eventually lead to a possible solution.

Experimenting means trying something while its feasibility is assessed. That means a lot of trial-and-error work. And that is why when experimenting, an error is not a failure but part of a learning curve, an error feeds the innovation process to re-focus and to make it more efficient. At a LABIC, every step from the initial idea to the development of the prototype or the final

product, requires to be opened to experimentation understood as a process of continuous innovation.

“Experimentation in our labs is not an individual experience but a meeting of minds where the more diverse the teams, the richer the results”.

Collaboration

Experimentation in our labs is not an individual experience but a meeting of minds where the more diverse the teams, the richer the results. This is what we call collaboration, and we address it as a task undertaken with one common objective by a group of people of different academic, ethnic, professional backgrounds and of a variety of origins, gender, and age in a level plain field where every one of them can participate in the process as equals.

Care for people

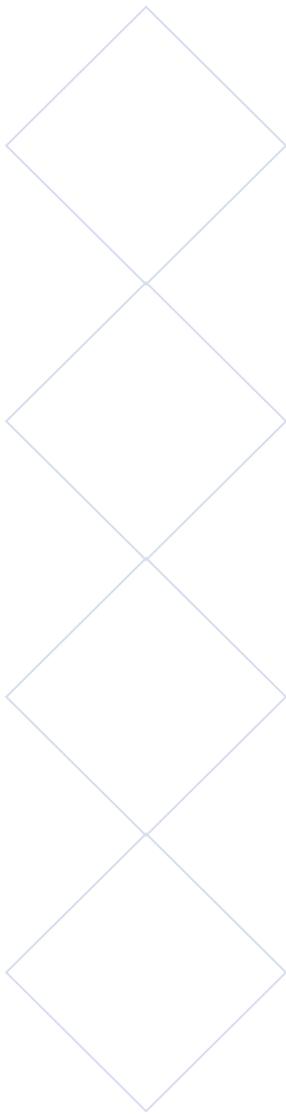
At the LABIC the people participating in the process are the most important component. So, special care is taking into accommodating the needs of those involved in our activities in relation to their diversity and the communities they represent. We appreciate that everyone involved in our LABIC is donating their time and knowledge for a common good. And so, we support them fully and wholly throughout the process facilitating their stay and helping with any problem that may arise during the procedures.





Phase 1: Ideation and prototyping





Setting the stage

Step 1: Choosing the location, topic, and partners

In order to organise a LABIC, the Civic Innovation Project (IC from now on) lead by the Ibero-American General Secretariat, SEGIB¹¹, entertains requests from different public institutions from any Iberoamerican country that wants to generate innovative solutions with the participation of local/national communities.

Once the IC has evaluated all the requests, it gets in touch with the institutions chosen and works on the theme of the lab that will be presented to the community. This theme will be related to a challenge that the city, region, or country are experimenting and that requires innovative solutions, such as accessibility for disabled people, improvement of the life conditions of women and children or issues arising from climate change, etc.

(11) IC, onwards

It is extremely important to choose a concrete theme that responds to the needs and everyday reality of the people involved in finding solutions to the issues presented.

As an example, we present the considerations that were behind choosing the topic for the LABIC celebrated in Costa Rica, LABICCR¹². The organisers analysed the following information:

Costa Rica is a country that occupies only a 0,03% of the Earth's surface but concentrates 6% of the World's biodiversity. In 2019, the authorities established a National Plan of Decarbonisation that contemplates moving to only green energy sources by 2050. The ambitious Costa Rican presidency proposal positioned the country as a global reference in environment protection, as a leader in decarbonisation, and a pioneer in the use of renewable sources of energy. In 2019 Costa Rica was granted the UN "Champions of the Earth" award for its pioneering role in fighting Climate change and for its compromise to protect the environment.

Step 2: Building the working teams

The first team to be set up is the organisation team made up by the two main participating institutions, that is the IC and the main institutional partner.

The institutional partner oversees liaising with other institutions and local groups that might be interested in participating. The IC contributes with criteria and experiences to help identify any internal or external factors that can have a positive or negative effect in the progress of the LABIC.

The second team to be created is formed by three or four mentors versed in the lab's theme, methodology and

(12) The specific LABIC takes its name from the place where it is held. Therefore, LABICCR, in Costa Rica, or LABICMEX, in Mexico.

development of projects. Their role is to support the working teams with advice and information. The mentors are selected for each specific LABIC.

Step 3: Open calls

The LABIC thrive to promote the participation of communities from the 22 countries that form Iberoamerica and to create opportunities to exchange ideas through collective knowledge.

To achieve this goal, the IC launches two calls. The first one is to invite projects related to the theme of the lab. The IC team recommends that a maximum of ten projects be selected. The second call is launched after the projects have been selected and it is directed to find the participants whose profiles guarantee the development of a prototype.

All the participants must be creative people of legal age, with a desire to contribute to the common good. The terms and conditions need to be adapted to the host country and required to be sensitive to the language, the culture, and the theme chosen. This attention to detail makes every event unique and tailor made. Details of certain other aspects will be explained below.

“The LABIC thrive to promote the participation of communities from the 22 countries that form Iberoamerica and to create opportunities to exchange ideas through collective knowledge”.

Projects call

We accept individual as well as group projects. The proposals can range from social transformation ideas to design initiatives such as product creation, facilities layouts, platform planning; and must promote the development of innovative methodologies adapted to the context and the communities involved. The projects can include the use of digital technologies as well as social or ancestral approaches to reach their objectives.

The call requests a full description of the project by the person who leads it plus the profiles of nine other people known contributors; it also requires the list of materials needed to build the prototype. The person registering the proposal is the promoter.

A committee made up of the organisation and the mentors select the projects according to the following criteria:

- Suitability to the proposed topic of the lab.
- Clear and precise objectives that promote change.
- Quality, originality, and innovation.
- Potential for scalability and maturity of the project¹³.
- Technical viability.
- Clear identification of the people who will benefit from the project.
- Optimisation of resources.
- Contributors should be of diverse backgrounds in terms of countries and gender.

Call for the contributors

A call for the team members or contributors. The committee will select them according to the following criteria:

- Suitability to the profile or role required by the projects.
- Degree of motivation.
- Availability.
- Ethnic diversity, gender parity and geographical variety.

The organisation suggests that every group should have a person in charge of communications, as this role will become crucial later as the project develops.

Step 4: Communication

Clear, direct, and efficient communication is key to the LABIC's success. We talk about three types of communication: internal, between the organisers themselves; external, so that more people get to know about the process and its stages; and collaborative, in which all parts engage in dialogue to further the objectives of the process.

(13) This is the potential of a project to grow and develop after it has been prototyped.

We stress the importance of training the teams in communication skills so they can competently share the innovative parts of the project they are working on and leave out the superfluous. The communication strategy must respond to the needs of each one of the innovative processes, identifying narratives and specifying the human, technical or financial resources needed to accomplish the end goal.

To achieve a successful communications strategy, we need to focus it on the main theme and consider a number of related issues such as:

- Who is the target of the information: age range, agencies, NGO's, public or private institutions, collectives, citizens groups, etc. Focus on the theme of the lab.
- Which channels will be used to convey the information: social media, traditional media, new media, websites. So, know your audience.
- What kind of formats will be used to pass on the messages: static designs, animations, videos, texts, material adapted for people with disabilities, etc.

“... the importance of training the teams in communication skills so they can competently share the innovative parts of the project and leave out the superfluous”



Summarising all of the above, it is crucial to know your audience and identify the possible channels to transmit the information. This way we make sure to optimise the resources available.

Key periods in Phase 1

Period 1: Ideation lab

The process of devising ideas and developing them is a powerful one with the potential to generate small transformations as well as revolutionary changes.

In the context of the labs, this moment starts when the projects and the people working on them have been selected. The first contact is an online format and lasts between three and five days (depending on the number of projects selected). It has the following goals:

- To consolidate the working teams defining roles and responsibilities.
- To draw an action plan and define a budget for the project.
- To list the materials needed to create the prototype.

In order to fulfil these objectives, the organisers offer the participants some activities:

1. An entrepreneurship and company formation course.
2. Meetings and workshops conducted by the group of mentors.
3. Mentoring sessions with all the working teams.

Period 2: Production lab

This is the moment when the proposed solutions are developed by the working team members. This is done on-site over ten days and has the following objectives:

- To design, develop, and produce the prototypes.
- To communicate the final results of the projects.

Below, we detail how we tackle each one of these processes during the lab event period and how the whole production process comes together.

Prototyping

Once the people participating in the lab meet on-site, the work on the project starts. It is now time to move from idea to reality. The team concentrates on building the prototype, initially as a small-scale model. This process requires constant trial and error experimentation and brings together the common knowledge and the prioritised lines of action decided by the teams.

In the LABIC, designing a prototype is creating the first functional model for the proposed solution. Working with prototypes is an efficient way to save time and money as they allow the solution to be tested among with the communities and users before escalating the project.

Iteration with communities and users

One of the most important lessons we have learnt in the LABIC is that a solution is more efficient when it involves the community it is meant to help, and that is the reason why the prototype is developed with the community and in their territory.

The experimentation process, which implies design and redesign (corrections, adjustments, etc) includes feedback from the target users and takes their context into consideration. This is what we call iteration.

All the LABIC participants have specific knowledge and experience that they use to create the final product. Accordingly, the communities involved in the project bring their own know-how to the process. This two-way system feeds the proposals, adjusting them better to the tangible necessities of those communities, and so making them more likely to be implemented in the future.

Pitching workshop

As we have stressed before, the development of the projects requires a good system of communication and documentation. A poorly explained project is a bad project. The main aspects of the pitching stage are:

“This two-way system feeds the proposals, adjusting them better to the tangible necessities of those communities, and so making them more likely to be implemented in the future”.

- To formulate workshops aimed at providing the participants with communicational skills.
- To tailor a strategy for each project, establishing a communicational goal that allows the use of contemporary tools fit for the context.
- To prepare a 5-minute presentation clearly communicating the result of the lab: the pitch should be centred on the empathy with the prototype’s final user, avoiding technical terminology and focus on the benefits of the product, its innovation, and putting emphasis on affordability and replicability.

The organisers offer training sessions to help the teams prepare for the final day presentation to make sure it highlights its potential for scalability and its benefits to the community.

The training for the final presentations focuses on making sure they reflect the scope and the full benefits of the project. While the presentations are getting ready, the participants identify priorities, objectives, and final users, making sure that the product improves. Communication among all the parts involved in the LABIC is the key to successful outcomes.

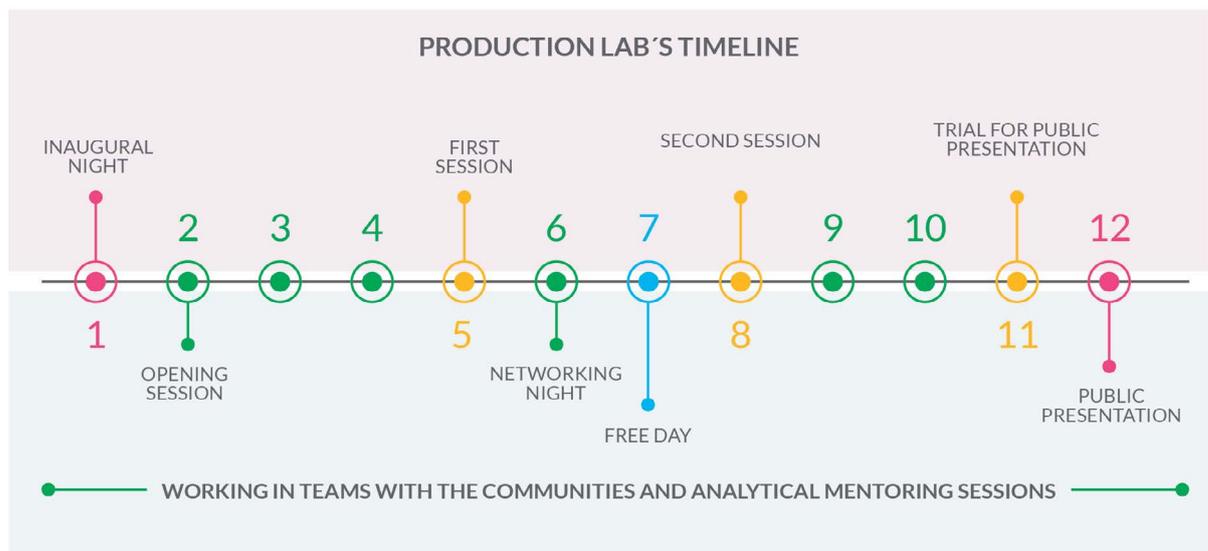
Mentoring sessions

It is quite normal that during the process of the LABIC, the teams might experience moments of frustration, disorientation, even internal conflict, or difficulty pinning the priorities of the work to tackle. In these situations, mentoring sessions are the best

tool to guarantee the process gets unlocked and the project moves on and even improves.

The objectives of the mentoring sessions are:

- To offer the team professional and specialised support along the way.
- To contribute to the team reaching their objectives and the full potential of the project looking at alternative proposals, identifying strategies and finding the best methodologies to develop the prototype.



Period 3: Sharing knowledge

The objective is to share the experience in two ways:

The first one, as we explained before, is to do a final presentation of each project – in pitch form- prepared during the working sessions on the lab's production days. This is a way to close procedures while sharing the work done with the public. The organization finds a relevant venue and invites the general public, as well as stakeholders (possible investors, authorities, national and international institutions) to be presented with the results of the LABIC work.

“...every team documents their work on the projects step by step [...] so that it can be shared in a repository”.

It is also very important that the communities linked to the project are present in this event as well as any authorities involved in the developed projects and any institutions interested in producing or financing the prototypes. The final presentation will be broadcasted live on digital platforms to promote in other countries.

Another important element of the LABIC is that every team documents their work on the projects step by step. Once the lab is finished, each group gives the organisers all the documentation related to the prototype so that it can be shared in a repository managed by the IC¹⁴.

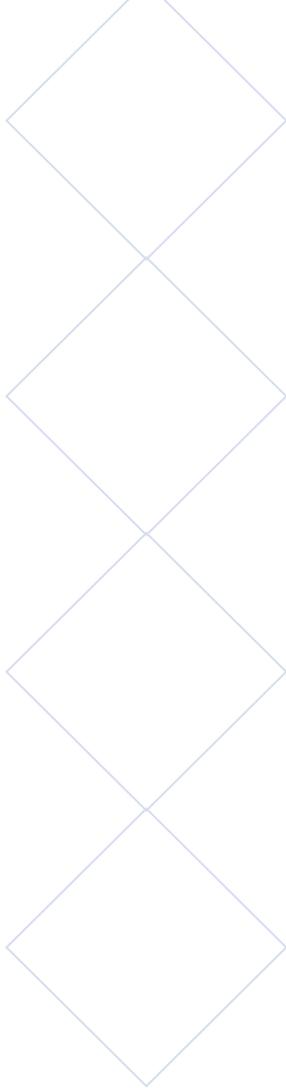


(14) This repository is available at <https://www.innovacionciudadana.org/laboratorios/>



Phase 2: Maturation





As the World encounters unprecedented challenges, societies need innovative, efficient, and durable solutions for them. Democratic states strive to guarantee that the majority of their population live a better life.

When we make possible for one person to drink water for the first time by themselves or when we help a rural community -with no access to electricity- to produce energy from a simple plant pot, we are changing lives for the better. However, to achieve a long-lasting impact in the life of communities is not easy and despite the fact that the civic labs have been a remarkable breakthrough in finding solutions in a collaborative and innovative way, their scope might be limited as they have a short timeline in which to produce the prototype desirable for the target users.

Redesigning the model

The process of maturation

The IC conducted a poll among participants in LABIC to find out how they thought the solutions created would fare in the future. Most answers reflected the view that people felt they were swimming against the tide as they confronted the real

“... IC decided to formulate a new process to consolidate teams and strengthen solutions based on the LABIC model”.

world: most encountered constraints to get the capital needed to push the projects forward, realised the need to create strong networks, and lamented not having a stable team.

With the ambition to transform this uphill struggle into a new drive to move forward, the IC decided to formulate a new process to consolidate teams and strengthen solutions based on the LABIC model: a willingness to work for the common good and to contribute with viable solutions based on experience in a context of open knowledge. These characteristics represent a challenge for the normal incubation models and so we realised there was a need for an *ad hoc* method. We then asked ourselves:

- How do we take the LABIC results to a wider range of people?
- How can we help the teams to create solutions that are lasting?
- How do we prove that the LABIC prototypes can be functional solutions developed by teams of people working in harmony?
- How can we generate more concrete and mature projects?
- How do we adjust the local context to solutions and give them durability?

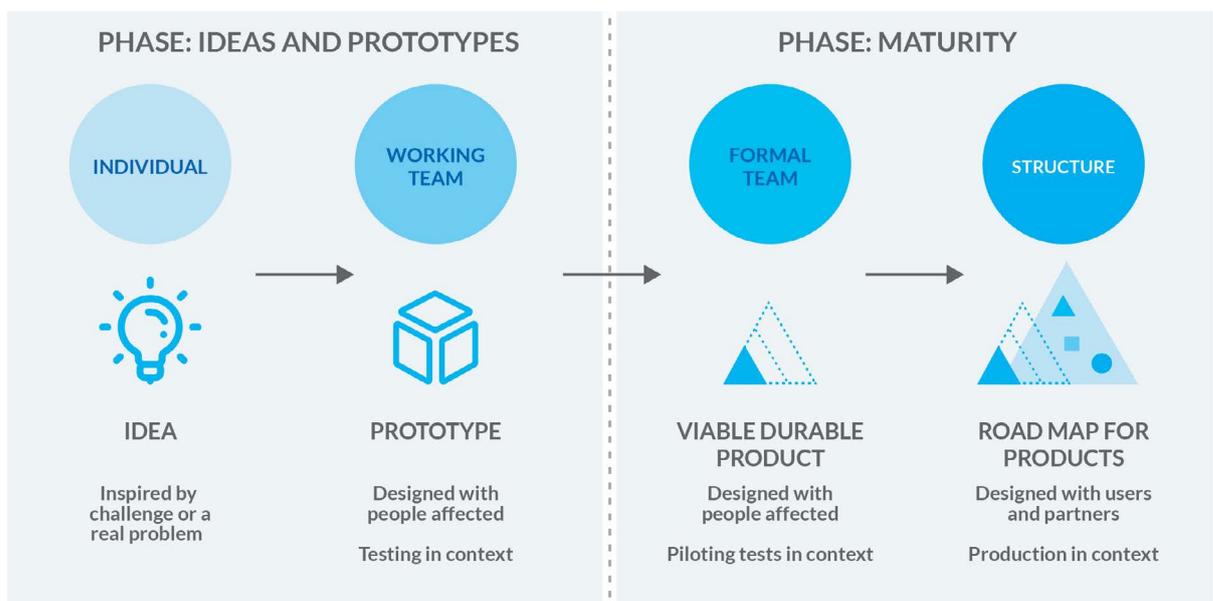
During Phase 2 the LABIC intends to take the projects to a higher level of maturity that would, in a good scenario, guarantee its scalability. This process takes between six and ten months.

To achieve this, we will revisit the prototype developed in phase 1 in order to transform it into a minimum viable product. During this transitional period the working team from the LABIC will become a formal team¹⁵.

(15)A working team is a task force, normally a group of people focused on a task for a limited period of time which will dissolve after the task is completed. A formal team entails a medium to long term compromise and the pledge to work together sorting any hurdles to achieve their goals.

This new maturity process will aim at giving the product/solution continuity through a detailed road map that will establish the direction of the project, and the vision and priorities to convert it into a long term one. In terms of the team, this phase will be used to consolidate the internal organization through a variety of mechanisms (described below) that should allow it to become a more stable structure such as a cooperative, a company, a trust, etc.

This maturation process has been pioneered in ten citizen projects between 2020 and 2022 and as a result, nine out of the ten teams are working with the selected communities and making headway in solutions related to disability and environment.



Financing

The organisers give a seed capital to each one of the groups to invest in the development of their projects.¹⁶

(16) Financing ranges from 3000 to 10000 euros depending on the scaling aim of each project.(from local to international).

The objective of this lump sum is to help the team escalate their prototype in the medium term and not really to finance replicas.

The teams must define and manage their strategy in liaison with the mentors and under the supervision of the IC. At the end of the process, they are expected to produce a full financial report of all the expenses.

We've designed a four steps plan to facilitate the process to mature the projects:

Step 1: Building the teams

The organisers, just like in Phase 1, will be the IC and the social partner. A brand-new mentoring team will be created to support the participants permanently, a team composed of three people with experience in social entrepreneurship projects as well as scalability and design.

Step 2: Selection of workable projects

The organisers re-call projects that went through Phase 1 and that show scalability potential. They must include at least one of the participants in the working teams of the original lab.

The selection criteria is:

- The prototype's potential for scalability in relation to its development.
- The ability of the project to gather a team with participants willing to continue developing the product beyond the LABIC.
- Suitable profiles and responsibilities among the members of the team in the territory where the project is to be implemented.
- A successful proposal to help mature the project from the team interested. The proposal must contain a clear road map, an estimated budget, and a future vision of the end goal.

“We propose a series of missions, which are a set of coordinated actions through which the participants must find an appropriate and durable solution”.

Step 3: Online training

The teams will benefit from programmes of entrepreneurship, strategies design, based on the experiences of entrepreneurs who use these tools frequently. This training will form a baseline of knowledge that will be enhanced by the mentoring sessions.

Step 4: Mentoring and missions

Mentoring will occur fortnightly during the first months of this phase and monthly in the last months. Its development will depend on how and in which direction the teams want to evolve. We propose a series of missions, which are a set of coordinated actions through which the participants must find an appropriate and durable solution.

The brainstorming sessions will ultimately be decided by the team depending on their specific needs. The following ideas have been defined by the IC and our mentoring teams to facilitate brainstorming and decision making within the teams in order to achieve their goals.

The missions are carried out by teams based on their specific needs, Which path to follow will ultimately be decided by the team. The missions have been defined by the IC and the mentoring team who act as facilitators asking questions that allow the teams to define the way they invest their resources in order to achieve their goals.



MISSIONS FOR THE TEAMS

TO BUILD A TEAM AROUND A SHARE OBJECTIVE

- What are the dreams and aspirations of the team in relation to the project?
- Which challenges have they identify and what resources they have to tackle them?
- What is an attainable goal?
- How will you distribute the roles?
- Are you having some tough conversations about the project?
- Do you feel you can speak comfortably about difficult issues arising?

TO LAND A SOLUTION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE USERS

- Who are the users that have been in touch to try your solutions? What are their names?
- What are the team's responsibilities in relation to the territory?
- What are the actual needs of future users, prospective clients, and key allies?

WORKING IN A FLEXIBLE WAY

- What else is needed for the user to have a positive experience?
- Which functionality or experience is more important? How do you measure it?
- When can we put the product out there -even virtually- to get some feedback?
- What do we need to do in order to get there?
- When will the users actually get to try the product?

TO GUARANTEE THE SUSTAINABILITY OF THE SOLUTION

- What financial and human resources we need to continue?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the different financing options?
- What kind of organisation fits the project's needs?
- How many sales pledges they have or they could get?

TO GENERATE A COMMUNITY TO SUPPORT THE PROJECT

- Who will collaborate? How?
- Who will talk about the project?
- Who's interested in the problems the team is tackling? Who are its possible allies?

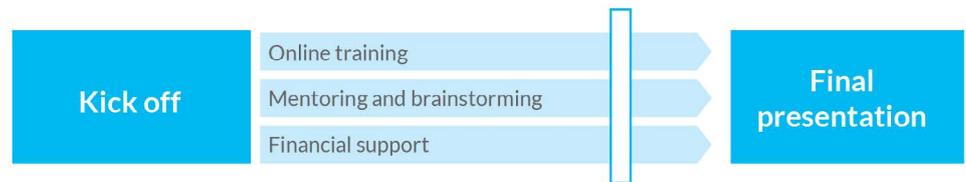
TO CONVEY WHAT THEY ARE DOING IN A CLEAR AND IMPACTFUL MANNER

- What have they done up till now?
- How does the project improve the life of the users?
- Who will it support?
- Which communication channels will allow us to reach the public?

Key periods for phase 2

This phase has four key moments for the organisers and the teams.

MATURITY PHASE



Period 1: Kick-Off

The teams will work for five days to achieve the following objectives:

- Mentoring workshops will be held to enhance the internal communication and management processes, to practice decision making, visualising the future of the project, and defining a road map for the team workings.
- A first draft of the budget to promote the maturity of the projects will be presented.
- A final presentation to showcase the project to the partner associations will be draft.

One strategy that exemplifies how the creative process is promoted is the design of a flyer explaining the project to the beneficiaries and their community. The design of this flyer will be finalised after incorporating the feedback from the users of the project on how to improve it.

Period 2: Progress in the brainstorming sessions

After Period 1, and for 8 months, the teams work on maturing the Project through brainstorming sessions aimed at:

- Consolidating the internal organisation of the team.
- Executing the road map designed.
- Making the necessary improvements in the prototype to make into a viable product.
- Repeating these improvements in the real context with the communities of users.

Simultaneously, the team will be advancing in other fronts:

- Creating a business and sustainability model for the project.
- Mapping the interest groups.
- Design a communication strategy based on plain language.

Once the team has progressed in all those objectives, the project has to go into pilot¹⁷ testing in the real context to get much needed feedback in order to incorporate even more improvements.

This part of the process is crucial for it to successfully move on into the next period.

Period 3: Sprint in context

Towards the end of the process, we reach the final sprint, a moment of consolidation of all the aspects that have been developed in the previous phases: the know how obtained through mentoring, the investigations of the conditions in the communities, the pilots, the tests with prospective buyers

(17) A pilot test puts an experiment to test in order to see if the prototype is suitable for development.

“Towards the end of the process, we reach the final sprint, a moment of consolidation of all the aspects that have been developed in the previous phases”.

and/or users of the solution (adopters), and the design of a sustainable business model.

This sprint mode intends to focus the team’s attention and seize on the collective stimulation to expedite the last steps of the maturation process. The main last objective of this period is that for the last ten days the teams test their viable final products on users, potential investors, and general public. In this way they give the project visibility and improve the team’s synergies.

Period 4: Final presentation

This public activity¹⁸ that takes place at the end of the maturation process is aimed at the team presenting its product and pitching it to the interest groups. It is important that as well as presenting the project, they highlight the results of the pilot tests and the feedback received from the beneficiaries. And even more crucial to emphasize the scalability possibilities of the project and the financial needs.



(18) As an example, please see the final presentation at the LABICMEX that took place in Guanajuato (México), in 2021: bit.ly/presentacionfinallabicmex

Evaluation of the maturation degree of the projects

The evaluation of the project is done by the organisers and the mentoring team, after considering the scalability and impact of the projects. This is a continuous process that takes into consideration the consolidation of the team¹⁹, the degree of development of the project, as well as the suitability and sustainability of the final product or service.

“The maturation of the projects is measured through the progress the teams make during the missions and how they fare in...”

The maturation of the projects is measured through the progress the teams make during the missions and how they fare in:

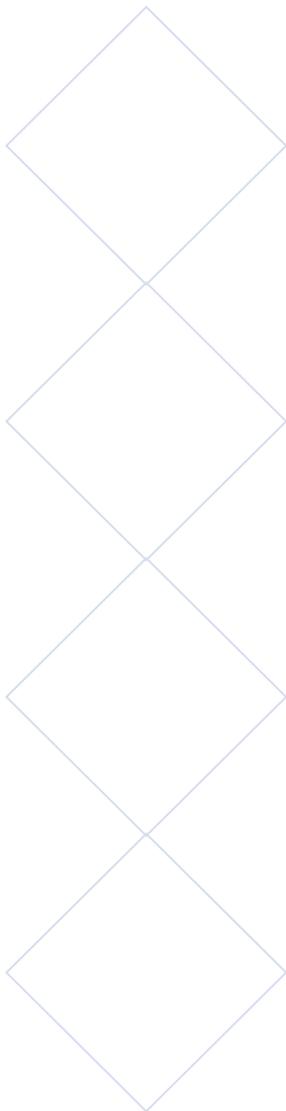
- Mentoring sessions, these allow for a constant analysis of the progress of the projects and of how the teams are responding to the challenges.
- An analysis of the results of the pilot tests that values the suitability of the product for the user, the production capability, and the commitment of purchases from interest groups.
- Achievements in the Sprint in context phase or how they were able to respect the original vision of the project, how well they resolved their conflicts and how well they establish relations within the community, etc.

(19) Even if the project is based on a great idea and has financing, it might fail if the team can't consolidate a common vision and learn to manage internal frictions.



Results





Those projects that have completed the two phases of the LABIC generate added value that can be described as:

Generating solutions

The LABIC are a simple and easy method to produce solutions based on a close collaboration with the communities that will benefit, and this collaboration guarantees that the solutions will fulfil their necessities, and that the solutions are replicable and have the potential for scalability.

To better illustrate this point, the LABIC boasts a record of almost 100 prototypes generated since 2014, that had pierced through borders and have been implemented in more than 15 Iberoamerican countries. And of the 10 projects that have progressed through Phase 2, nine have been implemented in different territories generating benefits and projecting its scalability to extend to other cities and countries²⁰.

(20) To study these projects in depth you can visit IC's mini website <https://www.innovacionciudadana.org/postlabic/>

Creating communities

In addition to producing practical solutions, the LABIC have contributed to build a community of more than a thousand citizens from 30 different countries²¹ that exchange knowledge, experiences, formulate new projects and even feed their know-how to institutions and groups they are part of.

Every institution in the XXI Century needs to build bridges with their communities to know the real necessities of the people and to activate the collective intelligence in order to become more efficient.

Transforming institutions

Approximately a hundred different institutions from Iberoamerica have participated in the LABIC. Many of them public, some private and some social organisations. Most of them have now incorporated citizen's participation in the procedures to come up with more collaborative solutions to the problems societies face.

The LABIC have established themselves as a practical innovation tool giving those institutions the abilities to generate more participation from the public, as an effective system to design solutions to everyday problems and to work on them from the perspective of the user; promoting empathy, openness, and collaboration. The LABIC have in his way contributed to restore and fortify the trust between public administrations and the citizens.

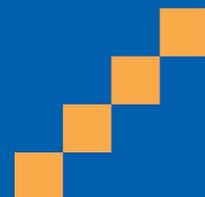
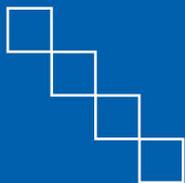
(21) As well as from the countries in Iberoamerica, the LABIC have received participants from Germany, Austria, Canada, USA, France, Holland, Italy, and Puerto Rico.

Opening opportunities

The LABIC are, as well as a space to produce solutions, an ideal stage to learn through experience. A space in which the participants straddle over a series of processes that provide them with important and substantial skills. Some of these processes include experimentation, iteration in different territories with a variety of people, receiving specialised mentoring from reputed professionals, learning communication, managerial and financial strategies, practicing the formation of solid teams and formulating a pitch for public presentations, and many more.

These processes stem from a philosophy of “learning by doing” and help strengthen a series of abilities that are not included in college curriculums but that are fundamental to negotiate our ways through the XXI century labour market. These abilities are: applied creativity, problem resolutions, team working, collaboration skills, empathy, emotional intelligence, communicational skills, and time managing. When these abilities collate with the previously acquired knowledge, they will secure people with new opportunities to face current labour challenges and future endeavours.





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