

# REPORT 2022

**Where we began:** The third edition of Wikimedia’s Accelerator UNLOCK was all about collaboration and cross-regional exchange. For the very first time, Wikimedia Deutschland teamed up with Wikimedia Serbia and Impact Hub Belgrade to jointly design and host the program. Together we reached out to the German-speaking region and Western Balkans to find innovative project ideas that break down social and technical barriers preventing people from both accessing and contributing to free knowledge – projects that achieve knowledge equity.

Following an open call in April 2022, the [UNLOCK Accelerator](#) received 34 applications from 12 countries. The review process involved not only the core program team – consisting of representatives from [Wikimedia Deutschland](#), [Wikimedia Serbia](#) and [Impact Hub Belgrade](#) – but also experts from the free knowledge ecosystem who lend their diverse expertise, experience and knowledge to the process. The review process was based on a predefined assessment framework. Find more information on this in our [blog post here](#).

Seven project teams with the potential to address knowledge equity through their projects were selected for the UNLOCK acceleration program. The program aims to build the capacity of the teams’ members – 24 participants from Albania, Germany, Montenegro and Serbia – and help them to advance their projects. We supported them in refining and validating their ideas as well as in developing their prototypes by means of needs-oriented mentoring, peer-to-peer collaboration sessions, experts from within and beyond the Wikimedia network as well as a scholarship. All project results that are developed throughout the accelerator program are openly licensed: all projects must be open source (as an open software project) or run under a free license (as a freely licensed non-technical project, e.g. art, audio, video, etc.).

## What we explore in this report:

This report covers our core lessons learned around the design and implementation of the UNLOCK program 2022. We also share some insights and experiences by the participants. In this third edition of the program – and particularly considering the collaboration with Wikimedia Serbia and Impact Hub Belgrade – we wanted to learn how to best contextualize a program that covers two different regions. This includes, how to best create a learning environment that invites all participants to collaborate and strengthen their innovative capacities; and what challenges do the project teams as well as we as the program team face throughout the course of the program.

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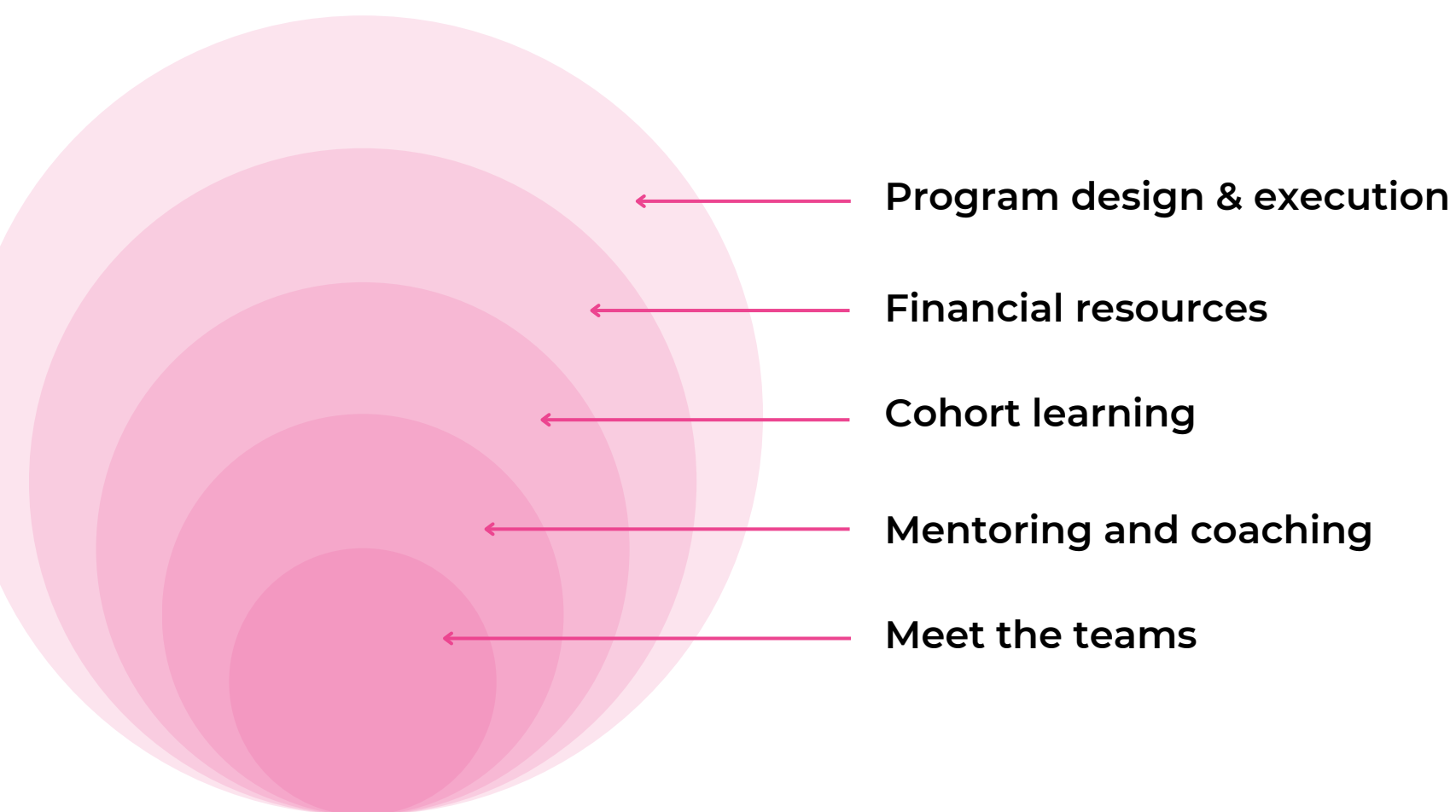
# The UNLOCK Program

**We accelerate your ideas. Together we build the future of Free Knowledge.**

Following our program motto, we worked alongside teams to uncover and learn the necessary resources, support systems and thresholds of focus required to take early stage projects towards the launch of their free knowledge solutions.

The program began in July 2022 with a kick-off event and closed by the end of October 2022 with a Demo Day. It was broken down into two development phases (aka 'sprints'). The first sprint (July-August) focused on validating ideas and assumptions, while the second sprint covered prototyping, testing and launch/scaling. The program also included three cohort learning sessions, a midterm celebration across the cohort as well as moments for checkins with coaches and mentors. Get more insights in our blog posts on the [kick-off event](#), [midterm celebration](#) and the [Demo Day](#).

The UNLOCK 2022 program was co-designed and co-organized by the program team of Wikimedia Deutschland, Wikimedia Serbia and Impact Hub Belgrade. By coming together each brought their unique expertise to the table, and thus further advanced the program. We were able to expand our international networks and could pull from a larger pool of experts who lended their knowledge and skills set to our program participants.



## Program design & execution

### Wikimedia Deutschland, Wikimedia Serbia and Impact Hub Belgrade

Throughout the span of the program the UNLOCK program team provided on demand support to the teams, as needed. Together we tracked the program milestones, expectations and progress. In addition, we also shared responsibilities within the program: Wikimedia Deutschland and Wikimedia Serbia were responsible for designing and facilitating the cohort sessions that focused on peer-to-peer learning as well as input from experts. Impact Hub Belgrade led the mentoring and coaching provided to the teams – either by themselves or by coaches and mentors from the Impact Hub network. Learn more about how we navigated challenges in an international & interdisciplinary collaboration – [here](#).



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**If you want to be a team and not just a group of partners, create an environment where you can pull from each other's strengths and learn to deal with “clashes” that might come up – due to different mindset, cultures and practices that come up while collaborating. Embrace confrontation, build trust and openness. – Lucia Obst, Wikimedia Deutschland**



## Financial resources

### Wikimedia Deutschland and Wikimedia Foundation

Wikimedia Deutschland has been the initiator of the Wikimedia Accelerator UNLOCK and main financial provider of the program. This year the Wikimedia Foundation has also contributed to the implementation of the program and covered the costs incurred by Wikimedia Serbia and Impact Hub Belgrade. As part of the support provided by the UNLOCK program, participants were able to receive a stipend of EUR 1.000 per month. The grants were meant to help finance the living expenses of the participants and make their participation possible if they intend to work on your project full-time.



**The scholarship allowed me to work on this project for the duration of the UNLOCK program time frame without having to worry about not making ends meet. – UNLOCK 2022 participant**



# Cohort learning

Shared learning across the cohort was designed to bring together not only the teams but also to connect them with experts from within and outside the Wikimedia network. Each cohort learning session kicked off with a cross-team retrospective among the participants. Through our jointly created working principles we were able to establish a safe space where open exchange was possible. Complemented by rituals and methods (have a look at our [UNLOCK toolbox](#)), participants could share their successes and challenges in the project / product development process as well as their experiences in working together as a team. In addition, we invited external experts to share their knowledge with the participants in working sessions, and to advise them on best practices in open licenses, community building, business design or financial sustainability.

“ Peer-to-peer sessions were motivating as we were able to learn from difficulties and experience of other teams that helped us work more effectively on our product. – UNLOCK 2022 participant ”

## Cohort Event I

Meeting the UNLOCK alumni – Gaining insights and inspiration from people who have already experienced the UNLOCK journey



Community engagement – Learning where to start when building a community from the bottom up as well as how to maintain and grow an existing community

Ivana Madžarević  
Program & Community Manager  
Wikimedia Serbia



Tight feedback loops – Understanding how to decide what to include – and what to leave out – when you first set out to create your prototype or Minimum Viable Product

Gaia Montelatici  
Co-Founder of  
Impact Hub Belgrade



Open crowdsourcing – An introduction to technical setups and work flows that enable crowdsourcing and user contribution

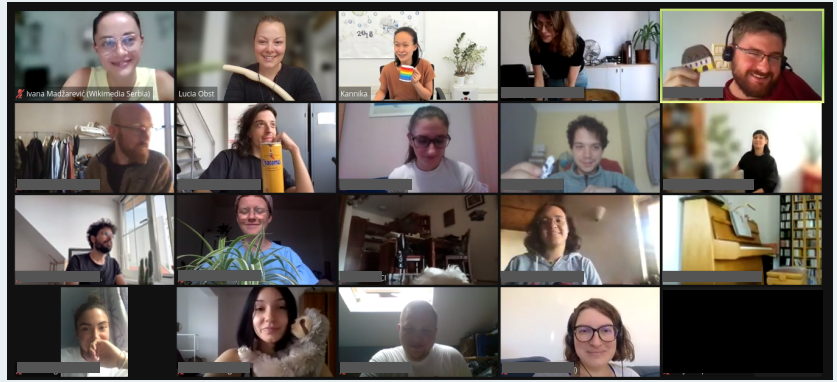
Eileen Wagner  
UX Designer &  
UNLOCK coach 2021



Cohort learning

Cohort Event II

Focus on the cohort and midterm celebration: Each team reflected on sprint #1 and shared their main activities and challenges

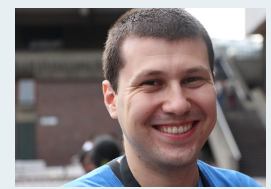


Cohort Event III

Open licenses – Getting an overview of open source and FLOSS licenses and their appropriate usage in free knowledge projects



Ivana Madžarević  
Program & Community Manager  
Wikimedia Serbia



Filip Maljković  
Lead Programmer at Heliant Health,  
IT Consultant & Board Member of  
Wikimedia Serbia

Team building – Learning about team dynamics and how to build a positive team culture

Caroline Szymanski  
Neuroscientist  
Co-founder of Kandoe  
Design Thinking Consulting



Measuring social impact – Deep diving into the tools and models that are needed to assess, measure and prove your social impact in the long term

Giulia Berti  
Program Manager  
Impact Hub Belgrade



Business modeling – Elaborating the different pathways to sustain your project

Gaia Montelatici  
Co-Founder of  
Impact Hub Belgrade



Ethical design – An introduction to ethical design – what are the possible negative consequences of the project’s solution and how can they be mitigated

Klara Lindner  
Service Designer  
Founder of Magic Investigations

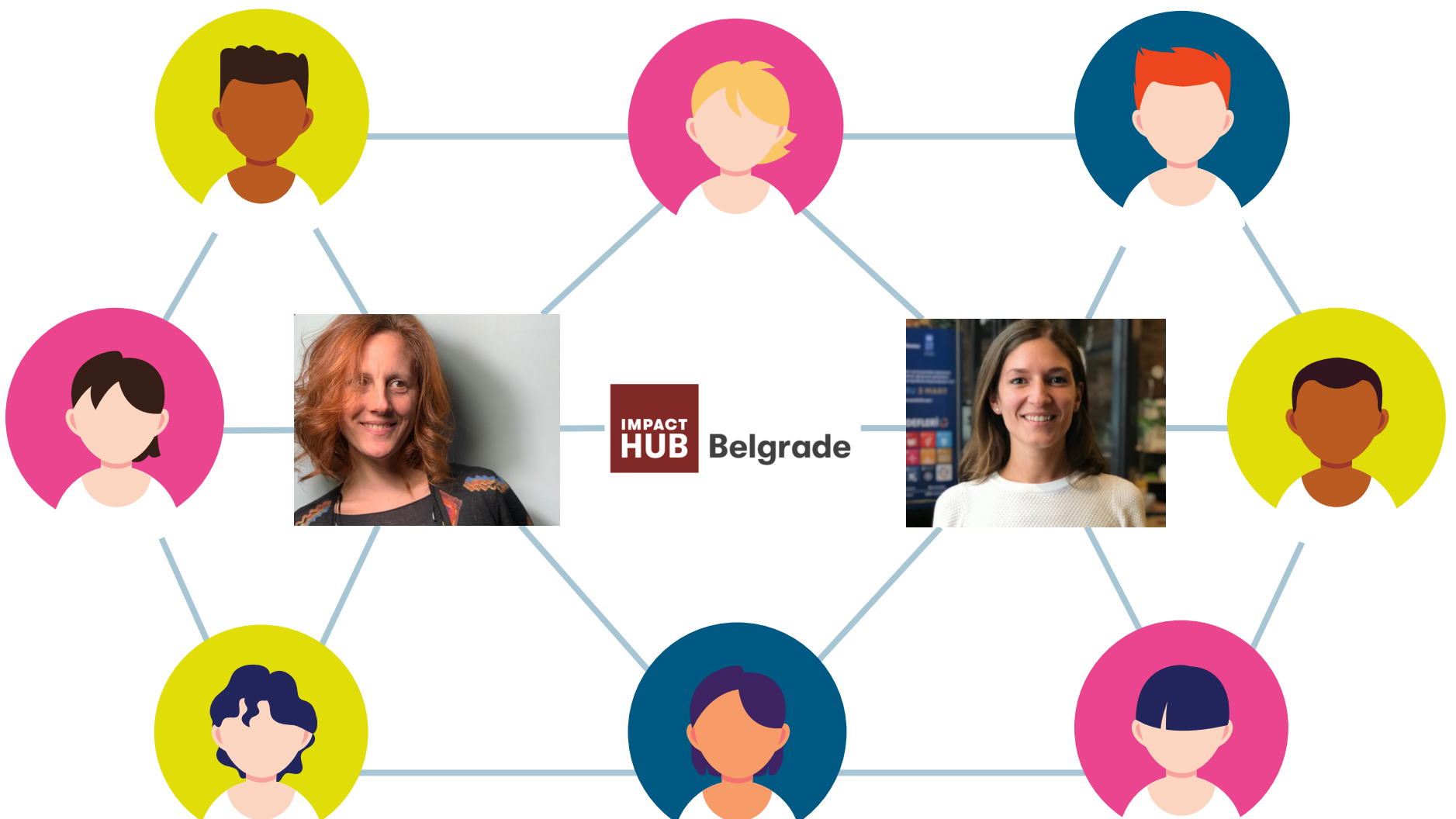


“ I really enjoyed the expert sessions – they shared their knowledge, experiences and ‘real life’ application with us. This was really valuable. UNLOCK 2022 participant ”

## Mentoring and coaching

Mentoring and coaching are one of the most important program elements at UNLOCK. The mentors and coaches guided the teams to develop the full potential of their projects by offering their knowledge, methodological support and an external perspective. The aim here is to help the project/idea mature and become feasible and viable. Each team should create a functional prototype (or even Minimal Viable Product), which will be presented to a public audience at the end of the program on Demo Day.

The team of Impact Hub Belgrade was leading the mentoring and coaching. Within their extensive network, they could bring in a diverse group of mentors and coaches into the UNLOCK program – people with expertise and experiences in social entrepreneurship, product design and development as well as business and financial modeling. In the sessions the participants deep-dived into resources on how to define and design for the prototype, its structure, and specifications, on applying the Job-to-be-done frame as well as users' habit-building plan. It was a combination of 1:1 sessions and smaller group sessions.



“

The mentorship sessions were helpful because there were smaller groups and it was possible to dig deep into the questions and topics that were of interest to us. – UNLOCK 2022 participant

”

## Meet the teams

Seven project teams across Germany and countries of the Western Balkans developed innovative ideas and solutions to break down social and technical barriers that prevent people from accessing and contributing to free knowledge. Each team was unique in their approach and context, but shared the commitment to address existing gaps in knowledge equity and to influence the broader free knowledge ecosystem.



**abedi** – A tool to collect and safeguard indigenous knowledge as well as raise awareness about biodiversity in the Amazons with a p2p offline-first methodology.

**activist** – A platform that connects people and organizations across different movements to allow for intersectional participation and support.

**humAIIn code** – An ethics certification for digital applications, addressing aspects of bias, discrimination of marginalized people and communities, diversity and inclusion.

**macht.sprache** – A platform for crowdsourcing and discussing politically sensitive terms and their translations as well as a browser extension tool to help translate with sensitivity.

**MOCI Space** – A platform to connect activists, grassroots initiatives and civil society actors in the (Western) Balkans region, allowing them to co-create, publish, and share knowledge in a decentralized way.

**IDE GLAS** – A platform that encourages young people in the Western Balkans to familiarize themselves with political decision making and to participate in shaping public politics through elements of gamification.

**Inclusio** – A browser extension for human-generated audio descriptions of visual content to the blind and visually impaired.

## Impact unpacked

As we tracked progress and impact across the program, we focused especially on which needs each team, and the broader cohort, had as well as the barriers they were most challenged by. We gathered feedback at the beginning, during and at the end of the program. Some feedback we were able to integrate in real time, in order to more effectively guide the teams in their development process. Others will be useful for further iterations and the developments of future innovation programs.

## Experiences of the teams



### Our highlight at UNLOCK:

A safe space created and empowerment through the UNLOCK community.

### What we appreciate most about program is:

- Pool of experts from different field of expertise
- Cohort learning sessions

### What we would like to see more of:

- Time and opportunity to interact with other project teams
- Even more experts and longer expert input sessions

### What's next



**The abedi project will only continue with the main initiators, some of the members left the projects due to several reasons. The remaining team members will work on the prototype and get in touch with the target group to better understand the needs of the users.**





# activist

## Our highlight at UNLOCK:

Learning from other teams and sharing experiences among others.

## What we appreciate most about program is:

- Individualized sessions with mentors and coaches

## What we would like to see more of:

- In-person meetups
- Cross-over sessions with program team
- Workshops on hard skills like how to use Figma or how to develop an open source product

## What's next

“ Clickable prototype is ready and being tested to gather feedback and we'll figure out how to access funding to become sustainable and to get more people onboard to join the development of the project. ”



## humAI code

## Our highlight at UNLOCK:

A safe space created and empowerment through the UNLOCK community

## What we appreciate most about program is:

- Individualized mentoring sessions especially with the Serbian mentors who were direct and straightforward
- Structure of the cohort learning sessions
- Energizing and warm up exercises

## What we would like to see more of:

- Individualized and weekly sessions with mentors
- Shorter and more frequent cohort learning sessions to avoid 'zoom fatigue'

## What's next

“ We'll continue to narrow down the product vision / our approach and find partners we can collaborate with. ”



## IDE GLAS

### Our highlight at UNLOCK:

Learning from other teams and having been nudged to get out of their comfort zone by learning new skills and new methods that helped them focus and better develop the project

### What we appreciate most about program is:

- Individualized mentorship especially with focus on project development and business modeling

### What we would like to see more of:

- Shorter online sessions
- Even more experts
- Interactive sessions where participants are engaged more

### What's next



**We'll work on our community strategy to get more and new volunteers onboard to further develop the project. We'll seek to create synergies with stakeholders we met at the UNLOCK Demo Day and with other projects related to "trusted information"**



### Our highlight at UNLOCK:

Learning from other teams and becoming part of an impact-driven community

### What we appreciate most about program is:

- Methodological support to build the prototype
- Better understanding of open source product development

### What we would like to see more of:

- Structure and guidance during breakout sessions with other teams
- Getting to know other teams better through e.g. a 'database' of projects, their members, team members' roles and skills, a progress tracker / dashboard

### What's next



**We'll wrap up the development of the prototype and start user testing. We'll need more support in open source product development, in building a community around their solution and in accessing funding for sustainable development.**





#### Our highlight at UNLOCK:

Learning from other teams and sharing experiences among others

#### What we appreciate most about program is:

- Expert input sessions and learning about the experiences from UNLOCK alumni

#### What we would like to see more of:

- Flexibility in the program structure
- Individualized sessions with mentors / 1:1 coaching
- Projects and project teams at the similar development stage

#### What's next



**We'll improve the feature set of the product and focus on web accessibility. We'll work on a sustainable – not-profit driven – business model and on proposals to access funding.**



#### Our highlight at UNLOCK:

Learning from other teams and sharing experiences among others

#### What we appreciate most about program is:

- Peer-to-peer learning
- Method session about user research
- Team management (how to work best and most efficiently as a remote team)

#### What we would like to see more of:

- Individualized sessions with mentors
- Method sessions about software development

#### What's next



**The MOCI Space platform will go live by the end of 2022 and we'll run user testing to evaluate what works and what needs to be improved.**



## Cohort growth

# 71 %

of participants stated that the UNLOCK Accelerator helped them to advance themselves and the development of their project.

# 100 %

All participants confirmed the importance of free knowledge as an integral part of their project.

For **57 %**

of the participants the importance even increased after joining the UNLOCK program.

## Skills developed during the program



### TOP 3 skills developed

1. Applying human-centered design
2. Community building and engagement as well as project management
3. Product development

were typically named in this particular – early-stage – project phase, where most of the teams were at. It is a dynamic phase where the ideas are validated and confirmed on the one hand, but also reconsidered on the other. It takes a lot of courage, openness and willingness from the teams to revisit their ideas, to get new perspectives from the UNLOCK mentors and experts, and to let them sink in.

## Most valued program elements

1. Peer-to-peer learning
2. Expert input
3. Group mentorship

Peer-to-peer learning included cross-team working and reflection sessions. They were particularly appreciated as a means to learn from each other and to exchange thoughts and experiences. Most interactions across the teams focused on exchanging experiences to build empathy and understanding along the process, and on sharing expertise on specific topics such as methods, data sets and other technical advice.

## Opportunity area

**More 1:1 and individualized sessions with mentor/coach:** We observed that mentors and coaches can help contextualize learnings, and open up new opportunities that can challenge and advance the project teams' ideas, with the caveat of creating the right match, and at the right time. Feedback from the teams showed a need of even more 1:1 and individualized mentoring and coaching that cater more to the particular project's need and its stage of development. In this case, we could have better managed the expectations from both sides: from the teams' perspective of "what we as a team need" and from the mentors' perspective of "what we as your mentors think the team will need based on our experiences".

## Challenges ahead

**'How to sustain?' is – probably not surprising – the most important question during and after the program. These are the challenges that were most identified by the teams:**

- ➔ **Professionalization:** Many project ideas were 'born' out of enthusiasm for a more inclusive and equitable future in which knowledge belongs to all of us. People behind these ideas often volunteer their time to turn their ideas into reality. Beyond the motivation and longing for impact, professional skills are equally needed ranging from project management, product development to business modeling and storytelling to make the project become more than 'just a passion project'.
- ➔ **Financial sustainability:** To consider this just as a challenge might be an understatement. Instead we could frame it as the one-million-dollar-question that haunted all project teams throughout the program. Can an open source / free knowledge project become sustainable at all? If so, how? What models exist? Diving into these questions are key to survival but they require a lot of time and resources that force many teams to either not deal with this question or to over-prioritize this question while completely neglecting other aspects of their project.
- ➔ **Stakeholder engagement:** Who are our 'partners in crime'? And, how to engage with stakeholders at such an early stage? It has been challenging for teams to prioritize what to focus on. Stakeholders can become critical in project and product development and it is often difficult to tell when to engage them and to what extent. Generally, teams tend to focus on their prototypes first as they think that it is best to have 'something well-developed to show'.

# Looking ahead

## What we learned, together.

**Upon reflection, we can truly confirm that this third UNLOCK edition was all about collaboration and cross-regional exchange.**

Together with our partners Wikimedia Serbia and Impact Hub Belgrade, we were able to set up a strong and value-driven partnership. We challenged each other's perspectives and learned to deal with 'clashes' in working style and culture. We could groove into a smooth working mode where each partner could pull from each other's strengths and thus advance the program to the next level.

Together, we worked as one program team and selected a diverse group of projects and teams that were as committed to knowledge equity as we were. The openness and curiosity that each team brought in was key to collaboration and exchange. We are more than happy to see how UNLOCK could provide many learning opportunities to the participants. And, at the same time we are more than thankful for each participant's contribution to the program as programs like this one live from the people who actively participate in them. It is their ideas and impulses as well as critical feedback that give the program its form.

**So what's next?** Since UNLOCK does not provide specific follow-up support, we look for synergies with projects where we see fit in terms of feasibility and commitment from all parties. After conclusion of the program the teams have several options to further develop their projects: They can either seek further funding, turn their project into a community project, build a business model around it, or seek institutional cooperation, e.g. with a university or other NGOs. Paving the way to sustainability is one of the crucial tasks of the program, but often difficult to accomplish in the short time span of the program.

For most projects the outcomes of our support will continue to evolve far past the close of our engagement with them, and 4 month engagement alongside them. After three program editions, UNLOCK has not only become a program that accelerates innovative ideas but also one from which participants could benefit. Therefore, the sustainability of a project not only depends on the development of the prototype nor on the paths the team will pursue following their participation at UNLOCK: Even if a project is discontinued, the team members have learned new skills and strengthened their network in the free knowledge community.

Through this learning and moving forward in 2023, we look forward to exploring how we can further 'innovate in free knowledge'. This means re-imagining UNLOCK, experimenting with and testing other innovation methods and formats that provide a support environment in which innovations and innovators for free knowledge can grow even more. And of course, we won't do this alone. We would like to continue the collaboration and co-creation path and are excited to broaden our network. Together, we build the future of free knowledge.