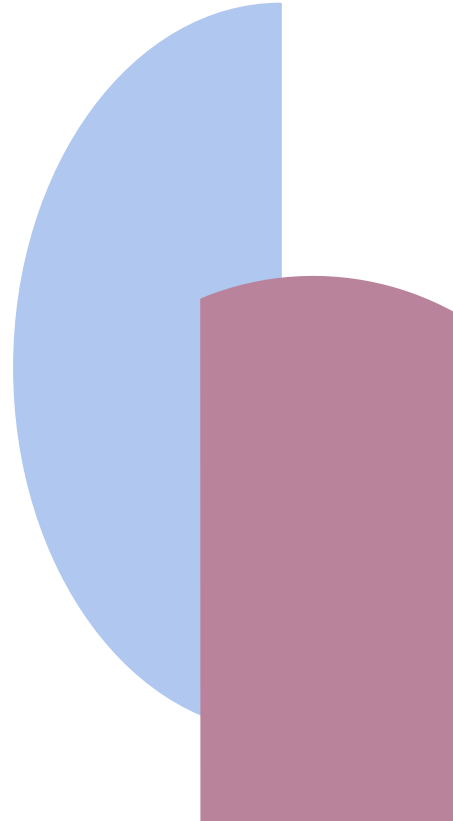# InnoLab: Cultivating Cross-Affiliate Innovation for Wikimedia

Introduction

- This project aims to create new pathways that will drive and facilitate innovation in Free Knowledge.
- It is a cross-affiliate project.
- This format should encourage members of the Movement to experiment with and create new ideas on free knowledge.
- It will be a space where we can think about and build specific tools, technologies and projects.

Introduction

★   Joint understanding of what innovation means in the global context of Free Knowledge

★   Identifying what the challenges that hinder innovation activities in certain contexts and develop, prototype and test ideas on how to overcome these challenges

★   Creating a space for knowledge exchange and skills sharing on the topic of Innovation in Free Knowledge

★   Bringing Movement members together with the potential to partner in new allyships

★   Formulating a set of recommendations for improving the Movement's innovation system, capacity and infrastructure

PARTNERS

Wikimedia Deutschland
Lucia Obst
Sissela Björk

Wikimedia Serbia
Ivana Madžarević

Wikimedia Community User Group Kenya
Carol Mwaura
Winnie Kabintie

Wikimedia Argentina
Angie Cervellera
Carolina Padró

Wikimedia Community User Group Uganda
Douglas Ssebaggala

Wikimedia Community User Group Tanzania
Antoni Mtavangu

"Interrelated results that our respective projects and activities could impact on the movement"

How did you establish clear goals and objectives for your collaboration?.

We established clear goals and objectives for our collaboration based on the previous experiences sharing around Movement Strategy, the common, and interrelated results that our respective projects and activities could impact on the movement.

Douglas Ssebaggala
Wikimedia Community
User Group Uganda

"It makes us think broader and bigger"

Angie Cervellera
Wikimedia Argentina

Why would you recommend others to collaborate cross-chapters?

I would recommend collaboration between chapters as a way to create bonds between people who work with the same wiki projects but in quite different contexts. This results in an exchange of points of view on tools, organization, communities involved, difficulties that can come up. While thinking together on a project for such a wide and diverse audience -the wikimedia movement itself- our multicultural group of work is a plus point, as it allows us to think of different challenges people like us can face in our own contexts. It makes us think broader and bigger.

"Trust makes everyone feel confidence to contribute to the fullest extent of their abilities within the team"

What role did trust play and how was it built and maintained?

Trust makes everyone feel confidence to contribute to the fullest extent of their abilities within the team, which helps overcoming obstacles along the way during any project implementation. The foundation of trust is built by assigning roles to each team member and rooted in the belief that each person holds a valuable contribution to the project's success. This foundation, once established, is nurtured through an unwavering dedication to the shared goals, mission, and vision set forth collaboratively among all partners involved.

Antoni Mtavangu
Wikimedia Community User Group Tanzania

"Always start a collab by discussing expectations, roles and responsibilities"

What advice would you give to others embarking on a cross-chapter collaboration?

Give yourself a lot of time for the setup of your collaboration and then some more. No matter how much time you give yourself, you will underestimate how much time it truly takes to get to a point where you can truly operate smoothly.

Always start a collab by discussing expectations, roles and responsibilities of each partner and define what success looks like and what it would mean to fail in this collaboration. Be clear on where you are headed and the responsibility each partner has in making this happen. Divide tasks equitably. Remember that the level of involvement may vary from partner to partner as well as from week to week. Do a check-and-balance meeting frequently to see if you are on track with what you initially set out to do and what might need some tweaking.

Lucia Obst
Wikimedia Deutschland

Our greatest resource

Reflecting on our collaboration, one clear driving force and key to our success emerges: the collaboration itself. Our journey as cross-affiliate partners has been a positive and inspiring experience, fueled by the essence of teamwork that continuously motivated us. The diverse perspectives and expertise from each and every partner provided a wealth of insights and creativity, making our work both smarter and stronger. But not only has it enhanced the quality of our project, it has also given us a great dose of fun. This collaboration process is also respectful of everyone's availability while being dynamic.

What were some key factors that contributed to the success of the collaboration?
The key factors that contributed to the success of our collaboration were sharing similar goals, clear objectives, effective communication and possibilities to learn from each other.

Carol Mwaura
Wikimedia Community User Group Kenya

Collaboration beyond ours

To be able to be innovative for the Movement, we needed to involve the Movement. We recognized the potential in embracing collaboration beyond the immediate partnership and worked closely with additional stakeholders. Their inputs expanded and challenged our perspectives with diverse expertise, experiences, and insights.

Incorporating the knowledge of stakeholders serves as an effective mechanism for checks and balances, ensuring that our innovations remain aligned with the evolving needs and aspirations of the Movement. Our collaboration beyond our immediate sphere exemplifies a belief in the collective power of unified action to shape an innovative landscape, incorporating the voices and visions of all stakeholders involved.

How did you celebrate achievements and recognize individual contributions within the collaboration?

In an online-only collaboration, celebrating achievements has solely happened within the virtual sphere. However, Wikimania 2023 will mark the occasion with some of us meeting in person for the first time - a truly celebratory moment! I do feel that there has been a lot of appreciation and festivity throughout our partnership through each milestone. Both at the end of each meeting as they are mostly filled with a lot of decision-making and coming forward, but also during our workshops and sessions. There is always such a positive and supportive energy in this collaboration - we celebrate each other a lot!

Sissela Björk
Wikimedia Deutschland

An unexpected setback

The collaboration process, it turns out, demands a far more time than we initially planned. Our time plan underwent multiple revisions as we realized we needed way more time than we thought. First of all the planning phase was lengthened, particularly when it came to sculpting the collaboration's structure and form, prolonging the whole process. Also the navigation of the ideation phase brought its own challenges and prolonged the process.

A crucial lesson emerges from this: allocating enough time for the setup of collaborative dynamics is important, followed by an additional time buffer. No matter how judiciously we allocate time, we consistently underestimate the temporal requirements. Not enough time for planning affects the overall timeline of activities and desired outcomes. Bearing in mind the later start, a lot of activities were focused on brainstorming and ideation workshops, rather than on having the clarity on specific prototypes we want to develop.

Limited time and human resources across the partners are also one of the setbacks we encountered. We thrive on our diverse team, but this also means partners are in different stages of development and therefore with limited resources they can provide for the collaboration.

What were some challenges you encountered during the collaboration, and how did you overcome them?

Our collaboration encountered predominantly resource-related challenges, particularly owing to the pending approval of the grant, which has imposed constraints on the time we can allocate to this project.

Carolina Padró
Wikimedia Argentina

Our biggest fail

To ensure that all team members are fully engaged, motivated, and aligned with our goals we need to provide necessary resources. The InnoLab team created the grant proposal, aimed at securing the Movement Strategy Implementation Grant. Considering this was our second application, we expected a smooth and effective process. Unfortunately, this was prolonged and left the partners with uncertainty, which affected the team's motivation and proper InnoLab kick-off. It is our earnest belief that a collaborative effort is best fueled by a supportive environment enriched with the necessary tools and provisions. The challenges encountered during this application process have underscored the significance of securing the grant. Our shared aspiration remains resolute: to empower InnoLab with the resources it needs to flourish and drive innovation that leaves a lasting impact.

What have you learned about collaboration cross-chapters?
That it can be done! Cross-chapter collaboration is essential for the movement's sustainability. In East Africa, this has been our biggest pillar and it has helped communities learn from each other and bring about regional cohesion. It gives insights into communities beyond your own regions and builds connections.

Winnie Kabintie
Wikimedia Community
User Group Kenya

Our biggest scare coming up

Given we still have a lot of work to do and hit the targets within our planned timeline, our biggest fear would be to create prototypes that Movement either don't need or don't want to use, if those are not addressing the right problems. We also might face resistance to innovation among the community. Identifying challenges might help us avoid the damaging consequences.

This is why we want to share our progress step by step and invite the community to be a part of the process. Either by giving feedback, add suggestions, or try out the prototype, you can help us make sure that the needs are being answered and thus we are developing sustainable and long-term solutions.

What lessons or insights did you gain from this collaborative experience that you would apply in future projects?
Even though we have different perspectives, we're actually heading to the same goal. Our collaboration is enriched by diverse views of our partners and we're making sure that we're listening to the needs of different communities. All partners bring values to the project - those can be various skills, know-how in terms of research projects, connections with communities or partners outside the movement.
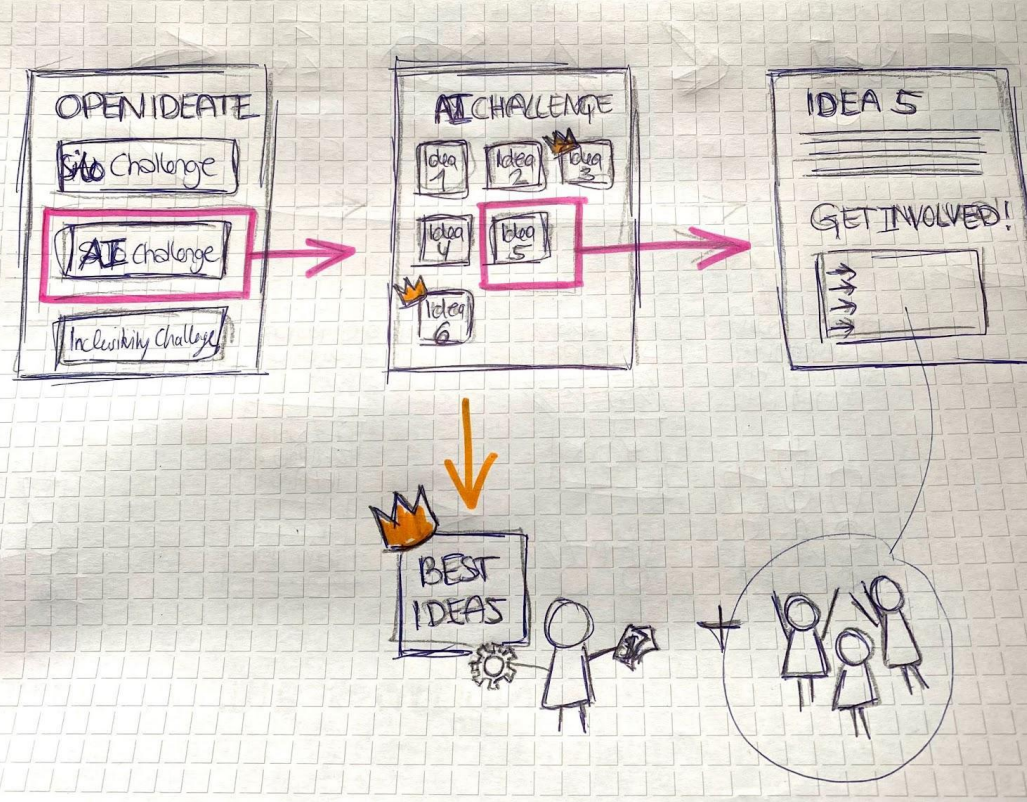
Ivana Madžarević
Wikimedia Serbia

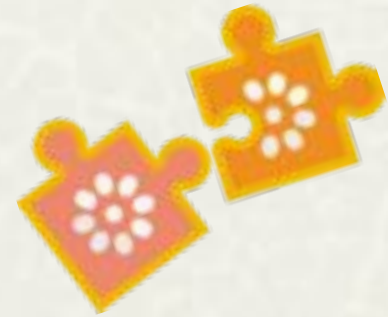Festinnova / Wikinnovation Jam

Festinnova / Wikinnovation Jam

- These Decentralized Collaboration Events are regular gatherings that bring together **developers and community members** in physical meetups or virtual gatherings;

- Events focus on **idea generation, helpdesk support, and troubleshooting**, fostering collaboration and knowledge exchange between participants.
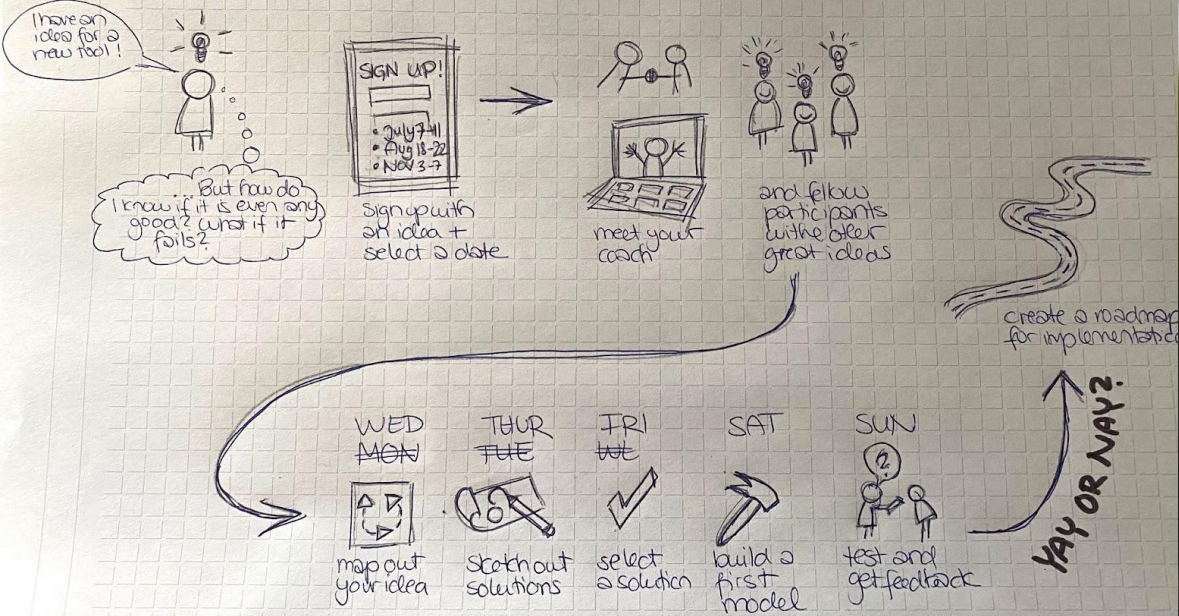
OpenIdeate / ChallengeCrafters / Open Ideas Exchange

OpenIdeate / ChallengeCrafters / Open Ideas Exchange

- A web platform depicting different **action-driven challenges**, which are based on research and contain a call to action;

- Members can add ideas on how to tackle the problem (a first sketch or a ready-to-scale project), other members can **view, comment, and develop ideas** further.

IdeaFactory / Build and Test Sprint / IdeaXPress / PolicyXPress

IdeaFactory / Build and Test Sprint / IdeaXPress / PolicyXPress

- A five-day workshop for developing and validating new ideas on Free Knowledge through prototyping and testing, organized regularly in different regional contexts/online, with fixed days and times;

- Members of the Movement sign up individually or as a team with an idea for a project or tool that they want to implement;

- Coaches help the teams to clearly define goals, validate assumptions and obtain real feedback from users before starting implementation of a solution.
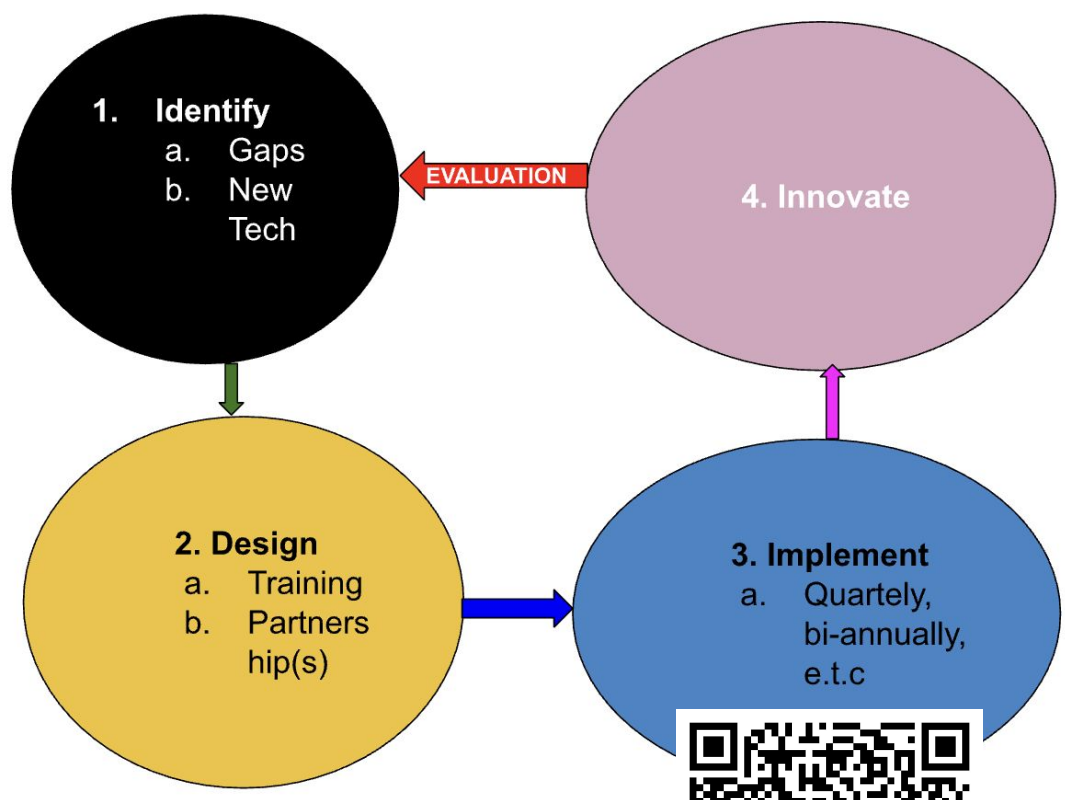
Investment Accelerator for Innovations

Investment Accelerator for Innovations

- A program that provides **financial support and resources** to potential innovations that align with the strategic goals of the movement;

- A committee of **experts reviews** proposals and selects projects (with specific goals, sustainable plans, focus on new tech trends etc.) in different maturity;

- By providing financial support, the program helps turn innovative ideas into **tangible projects.**

Loop MeIn

Loop MeIn

- Continuous training program that offers **education on new technologies** and how to use them for Wikimedia;

- The program **identifies** technology changes and updates and, through a **survey,** how many Movement members are familiar with these;

- In accordance with this, a new training program is developed and implemented with an efficient **frequency.**