SOLUTIONS LAB: A Blueprint for Accelerating Youth-led Climate Solutions.

impulsouth

GLOBAL COOPERATION FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Fundación Avina | FLACSO ECUADOR | UNU ViE | IDRC · CRDI Canada

Table of Contents

Credits 3

Introduction 4

Why a South-led approach? 5

The building blocks of a Solutions Lab 6

- One: Providing curated information on climate change 7
- Two: Building capacity through action 10
- Three: Enrolling a group of mentors 12
- Four: Assembling and strengthening a network 14
- Five: Providing seed funding and access to financing 16
- Six: Connecting solutions to global climate forums 17

A Solutions Lab: It's all about the process! 19

What types of projects does a Solutions Lab support? 22

- Capacity-building: a training sequence 25
- Be inspired, innovate, and grow 27
- Sequences for deploying solutions 28
- Model 1 – Wide open call and investment in selected participants. 29
- Model 2 – Wide open training and investment in selected participants. 29
- Model 3 – Selected investments and training through participation 30

The Lab's strategic benefits for solution teams 31

- Ensuring alignment with local challenges 31
- Supporting project design 31
- Building capacities 31
- Participating in conferences 31
- The role of the Lab team in enabling action 31

Final recommendations for donor organizations 32

Credits

Development and Production:
Impulsouth – Fundación Avina, UNU-VIE, FLACSO Ecuador.

Solutions Lab funded by:
International Development Research Centre (IDRC).

Climate Solutions Lab Coordination and Methodology:
Phumlani Nkontwana, Founder and CEO, Fuata Africa.
Gaston Kremer, Program Manager, World Transforming Technologies (WTT).

Playbook Lead Author:
Dr. Jose DiBella, Founder, Climate Geographic Ltd.

Playbook Co-Authors:
Erick Tambo, Academic Officer, Head of Pan African Cooperation and Educational Technologies (PACET), United Nations University – Vice Rectorate in Europe (UNU-VIE).
Ambe Emmanuel Cheo, Associate Academic Officer at UNU-EHS, United Nations University – Vice Rectorate in Europe (UNU-VIE).
Phumlani Nkontwana, Academic Director of Allan Gray Centre for Africa Entrepreneurship, Stellenbosch University Gaston Kremer, Program Manager, World Transforming Technologies (WTT)
Paula Ellinger, Climate Action Director, Fundación Avina.
Virginia Scardamaglia, Impulsouth executive team, Fundación Avina.
Nathália Rezende Mamede, Impulsouth executive team, Fundación Avina.

EDITING: Tertulia LLC.
REVISION: Tertulia LLC.
TRANSLATION: Signify Translation S.A.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Impulsouth would like to thank the first and second cohort participants, the mentors, and the entire Impulsouth executive team for their input and engagement. We also thank the Paris Committee on Capacity-building (PCCB) for their support in developing the training course and the Climate Solutions Lab.

Suggested citation:
DiBella, J.; Tambo, E.; Cheo, E.; Nkontwana, P.; Kremer, G.; Ellinger, P.; Scardamaglia, V.; Mamede, N., 2024. Solutions Lab: A Blueprint for Accelerating Youth-Led Climate Solutions. Fundación Avina.

Introduction

In the past decade, the science of climate change has made significant advances in several areas, including geography, governance, social impacts, and climate science itself. We now have an even higher level of certainty that we are experiencing accelerated global environmental changes due to human activities.

Despite the current wealth of knowledge regarding the many facets of climate change, existing governance structures, and financial resources allocated by governments, international organizations, and the private sector for climate solutions, there is still a formidable gap in tangible progress when it comes to delivering local climate solutions. This is particularly true in the Global South, where communities face the most pressing climate challenges.

In 2021, a consortium of international partners formed Impulsouth, an alliance of organizations working collaboratively to increase knowledge and capacities in developing countries to enhance climate action and promote South-South cooperation. The alliance engages in several activities in six countries in Latin America and Africa (the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Madagascar, Niger, Uganda, and Zambia) where it seeks to boost the role played by young climate leaders through research, training, and innovation.

The Solutions Lab is part of the Impulsouth strategy designed to help incubate and grow meaningful, youth-led climate solutions. The call for young professionals or entrepreneurs, aimed to enroll young leaders between the ages of 18 to 40 years old.

The Solutions Lab team employs mechanisms to identify and train entrepreneurs to deploy solutions that are shaped by local preferences and priorities and have the potential to introduce innovative business models into local communities.

With the goal of facilitating the replication of the Solutions Lab model, Fundación Avina created this playbook by compiling lessons learned by the Solutions Lab team, the Impulsouth executive team and Steering Committee, and young entrepreneurs. It is our hope that this playbook inspires and guides organizations across a wide range of sectors, including philanthropic organizations, executives, program designers, international development agencies (IDAs), higher education institutions (HEIs), and NGOs.

The Solutions Lab offers an innovative approach to the capacity-building process in the climate change adaptation-mitigation-innovation nexus, as it moves away from a passive approach toward active, experiential learning and jump-starts sustainable solutions.

This playbook guides users through the various stages of forming a Solutions Lab and, more importantly, provides a flexible roadmap to customize the model. Users should be able to develop an adapted architecture to identify, partner with, and invest in young climate scholars, entrepreneurs, and activists to help bring to life their visions for a shared, sustainable, and resilient future.

We begin with an overview of the main elements of a Solutions Lab, followed by examples of the types of projects that have been supported in the past. The next section describes capacity-building activities and pinpoints the type of training content that can equip young entrepreneurs and enhance their solutions. Next is a set of possible sequences for a Solutions Lab and examples of how the Lab model benefits the teams developing and leading climate solutions.

We conclude with final recommendations for donor organizations seeking to design and implement a Solutions Lab to address local climate challenges in Global South communities. We hope to both facilitate replication of the Solutions Lab model as well as encourage a flexible approach to find the best way to support impactful, locally-led climate solutions.

Why a South-led approach?

The dire effects of the climate crisis and shifting global environmental conditions uniquely and disproportionately impact communities in the Global South. These countries continue to experience more frequent and harsher impacts from extreme natural events associated with climate change, exacerbated by risk factors such as socioeconomic inequality, informal urban settlements, and ongoing governance challenges.

At the same time, Global South countries are home to the world's most diverse ecosystems and have a growing population of young people that are brimming with innovative ideas to accelerate climate action. The Solutions Lab model is intended to support locally-led climate solutions with the potential to reshape and inform broader transitions in local systems.

Furthermore, fostering South-South knowledge exchange is pivotal to addressing similar challenges across regions. By facilitating the sharing of experiences, expertise, and best practices among countries in the Global South, innovative solutions for common climate change adaptation and mitigation issues can be more easily replicated. Locally-led solutions, including those grounded in indigenous knowledge and robust community participation, are particularly valuable in this context.

> "Innovation is for everybody! From every sector, age, gender... diversity is a hedge for innovation!"
>
> - Solutions Lab Coordinator

These solutions are often more relevant, sustainable, and effective at addressing the specific needs and challenges of communities within these regions. Emphasizing the importance of locally-led approaches not only empowers communities to take ownership of their solutions but also contributes to building resilience and fostering innovation at the grassroots level. As innovation drives more strategic efforts to solve pressing climate challenges, the replication and adoption of new

methods, products, and solutions in local contexts is paramount.

To this end, the Solutions Lab model has three key features:

- **Meaningful pedagogy:** The Lab's educational component is designed to be accessible but highly relevant, guiding participants through weekly challenges to increase momentum in their ventures.

- **Practical tools:** The Lab is highly process- and tool-oriented to equip participants with what they need to enhance their solutions and track results. It is important to select easy-to-understand and easy-to-implement tools that can be applied to a multiplicity of innovations, whether they are related to policy or market solutions.

- **Scalability:** The Lab can be delivered online to engage young people in different locations and scaled across entire regions.

The Solutions Lab model aims to prompt and encourage experimentation, offering a safe space for participants to make mistakes and learn from them.

"Experimentation is key: participants had flexibility for making their own mistakes, including in the funding aspects."

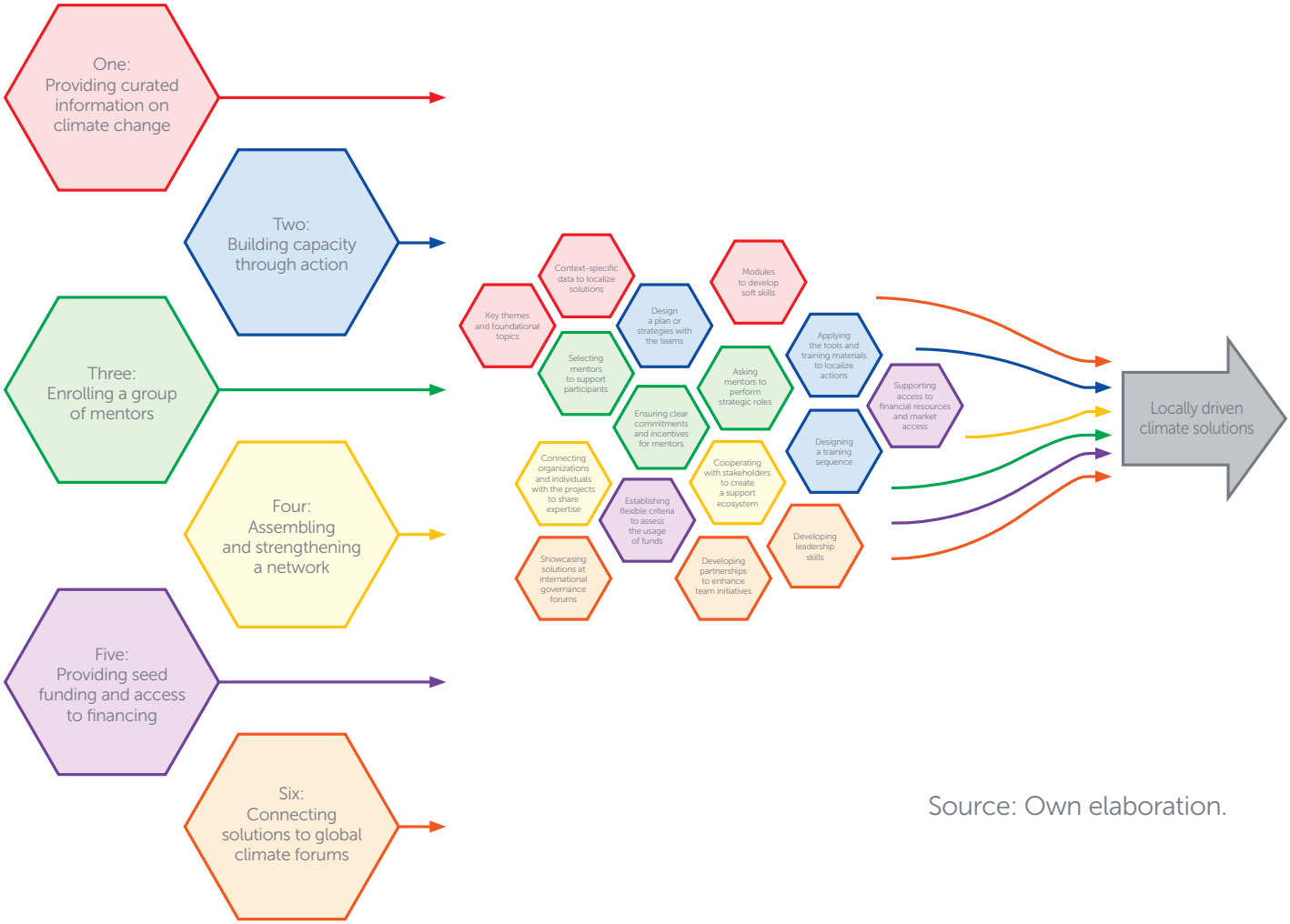
- Solutions Lab Coordinator

The building blocks of a Solutions Lab

A Solutions Lab provides knowledge, resources, seed funding, mentorship, and peer-to-peer learning opportunities for young climate entrepreneurs to develop solutions that respond to local climate challenges. Certain foundational elements of the Lab model differentiate it from a business incubator or accelerator, including: a curated set of tools and activities to build capacities; experimentation; a social learning process; and the facilitation of connections between local initiatives and global forums for climate action.

The Solutions Lab coordination team has created the following expanded definitions and examples of these foundational elements as a roadmap for replicating the Lab model. The questions under each element are designed to prompt users of this playbook to think about what is needed to develop a customized blueprint for their own Solutions Lab. This blueprint will then inform the specific steps for assembling and deploying a Solutions Lab, which are outlined later in the playbook.

Figure 1: Solutions Lab building blocks diagram



Source: Own elaboration.

One: Providing curated information on climate change

The Lab should first provide access to knowledge and information about different aspects of climate action (science, risks, vulnerability, adaptation, and mitigation) and cross-cutting issues, such as gender, finance, and communication. The appropriate format for the materials should be specifically tailored for the target community. This means using audio or video formats, field visits to complement the lessons or appropriate resources in the language of the community. Including, useful infographics, models and diagrams which speak to the sector or industry of interest to illustrate the many topics covered by the lessons. A flexible and locally informed curriculum is fundamental to both support learning and ensure a sense of possibility is conveyed to participants which is critical for accelerating initiatives. The organization preparing to launch a lab should ask:

What are the key issues and basic topics that should be covered to help Lab participants quickly achieve climate literacy? What context-specific data is necessary to help localize solutions? What additional modules will help participants develop soft skills?

Key themes and foundational topics

It is important to help Lab participants quickly achieve climate literacy and inspire them to develop innovative solutions. Therefore, during the early stages of the Lab, it is essential to cover key issues and basic topics to provide a comprehensive understanding of climate change and its implications.

- ***Climate science:*** Understanding the basic principles of climate science, including greenhouse gas emissions, the greenhouse effect, climate feedback loops, and the role of human activities in driving climate change.

- ***Climate risks and vulnerability:*** Exploring the impacts of climate change on various sectors such as agriculture, water resources, biodiversity, and human health. Understanding vulnerability assessments and adaptation strategies to address these risks.

- ***Climate change mitigation:*** Learning about strategies and technologies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, including renewable energy, energy efficiency, sustainable transportation, and carbon capture and storage.

- ***Climate change adaptation:*** Understanding adaptation measures to build resilience to climate change impacts, including ecosystem-based adaptation, infrastructure resilience, and community-based adaptation strategies.

- ***Global climate governance:*** Learning about the actors, policies, frameworks, and processes guiding international and sub-national climate action to situate their initiatives in the broader landscape of global climate action.

- ***Cross-cutting issues:*** Exploring intersectional issues such as gender, finance, communication, and governance in the context of climate action. Understanding how these factors influence climate vulnerability as well as adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Context-specific data necessary to help localize solutions

Harnessing context-specific data is paramount for understanding the context in which the initiative will unfold. The data will provide invaluable insights into the local environmental, socioeconomic, and cultural dynamics that are essential to tailoring climate solutions to the specific needs of communities. This is a cornerstone for localized climate solutions with lasting impact, yet many initiatives assume solutions and approaches can easily be transferred to their local context, but using the information to pivot, innovate or steer new initiatives is at the core of well-crafted climate solutions.

- ***Community-specific research data:*** Information collected in the target community through previous or ongoing research (studies, surveys, experiments, or field observations) can help anchor and localize climate solutions.

- ***Geographic and environmental data:*** Climate data such as temperature trends, precipitation patterns, sea level rise projections, and extreme weather events to provide insights into regional climate impacts and vulnerabilities.

• ***Socioeconomic data:*** Demographic trends, income levels, employment patterns, and social disparities can help tailor climate initiatives to the specific needs and priorities of local communities.

• ***Infrastructure and resource data:*** The status of infrastructure systems, natural resources, and ecosystem services can inform adaptation and mitigation strategies. This includes data on water availability, land use, energy infrastructure, and transportation networks.

• ***Policy and governance data:*** Local and national policies, regulations, and institutional frameworks related to climate change can help identify opportunities and barriers for climate action initiatives.

Modules to develop soft skills

Putting innovative climate solutions into action requires skills related to effective communication, collaboration, and interaction with peers, experts, policymakers, and community stakeholders. The Lab offers an ideal setting and process for participants to develop these soft skills to better attract partners to their projects, advance toward their desired objectives, and successfully deploy their solution.

"When starting a Lab to help local projects, having a diverse team with different skills is vital. This team should include experts in different areas like project management, community engagement, finance, and technology. A diverse team brings different viewpoints and skill sets, making it easier to support a wide range of local projects effectively. "

- Solutions Lab Participant

• ***Presentation and pitching skills:*** How to develop succinct, clear, and persuasive messaging. These skills need to be honed and tested with their peers, mentors, and external audiences to help teams prepare for funding opportunities and new partnerships. Leaders should feel equipped to consistently and confidently answer questions about their solutions, with an understanding of the expectations of their different audiences.

• ***Communication and stakeholder engagement:*** Effective communication strategies, public speaking, storytelling, and stakeholder engagement techniques to effectively communicate climate messages and build support for initiatives.

• ***Leadership and teamwork:*** Leadership, conflict resolution, teamwork, and decision-making skills to empower participants to lead and collaborate effectively within diverse teams and organizations.

• ***Project management:*** Project planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation techniques to help participants manage climate action projects efficiently and achieve desired outcomes.

• ***Innovation and creativity:*** Modules to foster creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, and innovation skills to encourage participants to develop innovative solutions and approaches to address climate challenges.

• ***Resilience and adaptability:*** Resilience-building skills, stress management, and adaptability to help participants navigate uncertainties and challenges in the context of climate action.

Two: Building capacity through action

Capacity-building should be viewed as a process where information is transformed into knowledge and placed in context to contribute to a specific action. At this stage, participants will begin to access seed funding, mentoring, and other support services. What is the training sequence and what are the key topics that can rapidly upskill participants on the fundamentals of climate change science, policy, and action? Which tools and training materials will better support the localization of climate solutions? Who are the ideal mentors to provide support to participants at the different stages of their work with the Lab? When do industry-specific mentors get involved? How?

Designing a plan or strategies with the teams

The first step toward action is working closely with each solution team, or the Lab participants that make up the team developing a local climate solution, to design a strategy for implementing the solution in their country or local context. This strategy will be based on the solution team's initial ideas and proposals, but it will continue to evolve as they receive input and support from mentors, engage with experts and policy forums, and test their ideas with clients and stakeholders.

• ***Facilitating the design process:*** The Lab team will facilitate workshops, training sessions, and brainstorming sessions to guide participants in designing local climate solutions.

• ***Refining the design through engagement with experts:*** The Lab team will connect solution teams to experts in areas such as climate science, policy analysis, project management, and stakeholder engagement to help develop comprehensive and feasible action plans.

> "It's also important to create a culture of collaboration, innovation, and flexibility within the team. This means encouraging open communication, creativity, and being ready to adapt to the changing needs of projects and communities."
>
> - Solutions Lab Participant

• ***Scaffolding the strategy development process:*** The Lab will provide ongoing support from the initial stages of idea generation and refinement all the way to the finalization of detailed implementation strategies.

Designing a training sequence for the teams

It is imperative that the Lab create an appropriate training sequence to provide solution teams with the right resources and relationships to refine their solutions, continue to steadily advance toward implementation, and achieve key milestones in line with their goals and objectives.

- ***Creating an appropriate sequence:*** After providing information and tools to upskill participants, a sequence of experiential activities, including peer-to-peer learning and mentoring, should provide more strategic guidance to enhance project designs.

- ***Learning by doing:*** Developing a pitch and business pilots can provide key hands-on experience to test ideas, business models, and markets for the solution teams' products or services.

- ***Leaving space for experimentation:*** Encouraging flexibility and adaptability as well as leaving space for experimentation allows for innovative approaches and new ideas to emerge and be tested. This entails taking calculated risks and making adjustments to the solutions based on real-world feedback.

Applying the tools and training materials to localize climate solutions

There are a wide array of available tools, guides, and resources to identify, plan, and deploy climate solutions. The Lab should ensure that the solution teams take a systematic approach to selecting the right resources and tailoring their solutions to the specific contexts and needs of local communities.

- ***Using participatory methods:*** Engaging stakeholders—including clients and customers—through workshops, focus groups, and community consultations to co-create climate solutions that reflect local needs, priorities, and cultural dynamics.

- ***Harnessing case studies and best practices:*** Sharing examples of successful climate projects and initiatives from similar contexts to inspire and inform participants about effective strategies and approaches.

- ***Selecting the right tools:*** Providing access to decision support tools, models, and simulation exercises to evaluate the potential impacts and effectiveness of different climate actions.

- ***Learning about communication and outreach:*** Developing educational materials, infographics, videos, and other communication tools to raise awareness and mobilize support for climate solutions within local communities.

© Rocío Silva/Impulsouth. Meetings with stakeholders in the development of one climate solutions.

Three: Enrolling a group of mentors

The Lab should identify individuals with an interest in local climate solutions and curate a group of experts from institutional partners within the broader local network, such as think tanks, universities, private companies, and international organizations, to serve as mentors. These experts should be available for periodic meetings, ideally with one mentee, and commit to dedicating at least one hour a month to online mentoring sessions.

Lab mentors may be involved throughout the duration of their mentee's project, offering guidance, feedback, and support at various stages, including project ideation, planning, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation. They can engage with participants through workshops, mentoring sessions, expert consultations, and networking events.

The type of support that can be provided by mentors and stakeholders to each project will vary, but the implementing organization should compile a preliminary list of individuals and organizations to ensure there is sufficient interest from experts and practitioners before launching calls for applications. This will increase the chances of the successful design, deployment, and uptake of solutions.

Selecting mentors to support participants

This is a strategic process that begins before recruiting Lab participants and will continue over the lifetime of the project. It is aimed at identifying individuals with the requisite expertise, experience, and interpersonal skills to effectively guide and empower mentees.

- ***Climate scientists:*** To provide technical guidance on climate science, data analysis, and modeling for assessing climate impacts and identifying adaptation and mitigation strategies.

"[The Lab] should provide capacity-building programs focused on essential skills for climate entrepreneurship, such as business planning, financial management, marketing, and pitching. These programs could be delivered through workshops, webinars, mentorship programs, or online courses."

- Solutions Lab Participant

• ***Community leaders:*** To provide grassroots perspectives, engage local stakeholders, and ensure that climate actions are inclusive, equitable, and culturally appropriate.

• ***Industry experts:*** To provide industry-specific insights, expertise, and connections in the energy, agriculture, transportation, finance, and other sectors in order to support the implementation of climate solutions in those industries.

• ***Policy experts:*** To assist with navigating regulatory frameworks, policy analysis, and advocacy strategies, and offer insights into how to leverage these skills to align local initiatives with national and international climate goals.

• ***Business leaders:*** To offer insights into sustainable business models, market opportunities, and financing options for climate projects.

• ***Environmental engineers:*** To advise on technological solutions, innovation, and infrastructure development for climate resilience.

• ***Social entrepreneurs:*** To share experiences in scaling up impactful initiatives, building partnerships, and overcoming challenges in the field of climate action.

Ensuring clear commitments and incentives for mentors

Establishing clear expectations, objectives, and responsibilities upfront is paramount to fostering a mutually beneficial relationship between mentors and mentees. Mentors will need to commit time and resources, maintain communication on a regular basis, and agree on defined deliverables. Ensuring clarity in commitments and incentives enhances mentor accountability and engagement with the Lab and the solution teams.

• ***Setting clear expectations:*** Establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and expectations for mentors, including the frequency and mode of engagement (e.g., regular meetings, email correspondence, workshops). Each mentor will commit to providing guidance, feedback, and support to their assigned team on a regular basis throughout the duration of the project, attending workshops, meetings, and check-ins as needed.

• ***Ensuring recognition and visibility:*** Recognizing mentors' contributions through acknowledgments, testimonials, and public recognition at Lab events and in Lab publications. Mentors should be acknowledged for their important contributions, and finding ways to engage them and make them feel like an integral part of the ecosystem is important to a successful mentorship program.

• ***Facilitating networking opportunities:*** Providing mentors with opportunities to network with other experts, practitioners, and stakeholders working in related fields through networking events, conferences, and online platforms.

• ***Including mentors in capacity-building:*** Offer training and capacity-building opportunities for

mentors to enhance their mentoring skills, understanding of emerging trends, and familiarity with relevant tools and resources.

• ***Creating tiered incentive structures:*** Providing financial incentives, honorariums, or stipends to mentors for their time, expertise, and contributions to support active engagement throughout the duration of their Lab-related commitments.

Asking mentors to perform a strategic role

Leveraging the strategic role of mentors can enhance a project's capabilities, expand its reach and impact, and increase its likelihood of success. By tapping into mentors' expertise, networks, and experience, projects can gain valuable insights, resources, and support that contribute to their effectiveness and sustainability.

• ***Providing key technical expertise:*** Mentors can provide valuable technical knowledge and insights in areas where the solution team may lack expertise. Their guidance can help ensure that the project benefits from the latest advancements and best practices in relevant fields.

• ***Pinpointing relevant content:*** Mentors can help identify and curate relevant content, such as research papers, case studies, or industry reports, that can inform decision-making and enhance the project's outcomes.

• ***Connecting solution team members to networks, organizations, and groups:*** Mentors often have extensive networks in their respective fields and can facilitate connections with other professionals, researchers, or organizations. These connections can open doors to collaboration opportunities, resource sharing, and knowledge exchange.

• ***Project socialization:*** Mentors can play a crucial role in promoting the project within their networks and communities. By advocating for the project and sharing its goals and objectives with relevant stakeholders, mentors can help generate interest, support, and buy-in for the initiative.

• ***Connecting to policy or government stakeholders:*** Mentors with experience in navigating political landscapes can provide valuable guidance to projects that involve policy or government engagement. They can help identify key decision-makers, stakeholders, and people with influence as well as advise on effective strategies for engaging with them.

• ***Becoming project partners and advisors:*** Mentors may choose to take a more active role in the project by becoming formal partners or advisors. In this capacity, they can provide ongoing support, guidance, and mentorship to the solution team, helping to steer the project toward success.

Four: Assembling and strengthening a network

This stage includes creating a formal network to extend participant engagement and lay the

groundwork for the sustainability of their solutions. Which organizations and individuals would both contribute to and benefit from such a network? How can the Lab encourage a favorable environment for the uptake of the solutions? How can the Lab cooperate with mentors and organizations to create a support ecosystem?

Connecting organizations and individuals with the projects to share expertise

This requires facilitating collaborations and knowledge exchange between different local stakeholders to help solution teams develop their skills, expand their experience, and enhance outcomes at any given stage of the project, as well as foster synergy and reciprocity with different organizations.

- **Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs):** Environmental and climate-focused NGOs can provide expertise in areas such as advocacy, community engagement, and project implementation.

- **Academic institutions:** Universities and research organizations can contribute scientific expertise, research findings, and access to academic networks and resources.

- **Government agencies:** Relevant government agencies or ministries responsible for climate change, environmental protection, and sustainable development can offer policy insights, regulatory guidance, and funding opportunities.

- **Industry associations:** Trade associations and professional organizations representing industries that intersect with climate action (e.g., energy, agriculture, transportation) can provide industry-specific expertise, utilize the products or services offered by the solutions, adopt best practices, and facilitate networking opportunities.

- **International organizations:** Multilateral organizations such as the United Nations, World Bank, and regional development banks can share global perspectives, funding mechanisms, and technical assistance for climate projects.

Cooperating with stakeholders to create a support ecosystem

This entails going beyond temporary engagements and helping to build collaborative relationships with key stakeholders to provide sustained support to the solution teams and their projects.

- **Coordinated engagement:** Facilitating collaboration between the solution teams and mentors, government, and partner organizations to coordinate support activities, share resources, and avoid duplication of efforts.

- **Resource sharing:** Helping to pool expertise, tools, and resources from stakeholders to create a comprehensive support ecosystem for Lab initiatives, including access to funding, technical assistance, networking opportunities, and capacity-building programs.

• **Cross-sector collaboration:** Facilitating collaboration and knowledge exchange between different sectors (e.g., academia, government, NGOs, industry) to foster interdisciplinary approaches and innovative solutions to climate challenges.

• **Continuous communication:** Maintaining open and transparent communication channels with stakeholders to solicit feedback, address challenges, and adapt support strategies based on the evolving needs and priorities of Lab participants and initiatives.

"By leveraging the insights gathered and collaborating with stakeholders, including the Solutions Lab team, I was able to develop NatureApp into a user-centric solution tailored to the needs of smallholder farmers. The app provides real-time weather updates, pest alerts, farming advice, and market linkages, empowering farmers to make informed decisions and improve their livelihoods. This collaborative effort not only enhanced the relevance and impact of the project but also positioned NatureApp as a valuable tool for addressing the challenges faced by smallholder farmers in agriculture."

- Solutions Lab Participant

Five: Providing seed funding and access to financing

Providing seed funding

• A flexible source of funding that can be used freely within the scope of the project. Participants have the freedom to design their own solutions as they see fit in the local context, prioritizing the need to learn by doing and fostering ownership of the solutions on the part of participants.

Establishing flexible criteria to assess the usage of funds

• In past experiences, the Lab provided all participants with seed grants split into two installments. It is important to keep in mind that participants, especially in the Global South, will need to receive part of the funding upfront to implement their solutions. In some cases, it is the only way to transform an idea into a concrete project.

• The criteria to assess the usage of funds were based on the initial pitch during the participant selection process, a final pitch after the Lab training and mentoring stages, a review of the solution's status when participants complete the Lab program, and a narrative report. Although the narrative report also contains a financial section, it is important to consider future sustainability and the reality of each country when assessing expenditures.

Supporting access to financial resources and market access

• The Lab, if possible, should offer unrestricted seed grants that can be used freely within the scope of the project. The flexibility of seed funding is important to give participants the space to

experiment with their ideas and truly support innovation.

• The Lab team will facilitate connections with potential funders, investors, and grant-making organizations interested in supporting climate solutions.

• The Lab should provide training on fundraising strategies, grant writing, and pitching techniques to help solution teams effectively communicate their project's value proposition to potential donors and investors.

• Partner organizations and networks affiliated with the Lab may offer funding opportunities, mentorship programs, incubation support, and access to markets or distribution channels for scaling up climate solutions.

• Additionally, the Lab team may collaborate with financial institutions, impact investors, and corporate partners to explore innovative financing mechanisms such as green bonds, impact investment funds, and public-private partnerships to mobilize resources for climate action projects.

• Complementary resources such as technical assistance, capacity-building programs, marketing support, and access to networks and platforms for knowledge sharing and collaboration will be provided to solution teams to enhance their project's impact and sustainability.

Six: Connecting solutions to global climate forums

Empowering participants to share their projects at global, regional, and national forums is key to strengthening their projects, expanding learning opportunities, and encouraging locally-led projects to influence the activities that happen at these larger forums.

Showcasing solutions at international climate governance forums

Having solution teams visit global and regional forums allows participants to present their solutions to potential partners and donors, learn from similar initiatives in their industry, and develop their leadership skills. Also, it provides the opportunity to find inspiration and motivation to overcome challenges and think laterally about their work.

> "Exposure visits [of the project teams] like in conferences to make them appreciate that their work matters."
>
> - Solutions Lab Participant

• ***Global forums:*** Such as United Nations Climate Change Conferences (including COPs). The objectives of attending these events include raising awareness about their projects, networking with stakeholders, policymakers, and potential funders, and influencing global climate change policy.

• ***Regional forums:*** Such as Climate Week meetings, which bring together the private sector, government agencies, and regional organizations to establish regional priorities and showcase climate actions. Another example is the Regional Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), which provides a forum for organizations engaged in disaster risk reduction to showcase practical applications for disaster resilience, exchange experiences, and develop strategies to guide local actions.

Developing leadership skills

• ***Delivering compelling presentations:*** Participants should be able to effectively and clearly communicate the problem their project addresses, their innovative solution, and its impact (expected and/or actual).

• ***Demonstrating proof of concept and results:*** Participants should be able to show evidence of their project's success through data, testimonials, or prototypes to strengthen credibility and attract interest from potential partners or investors.

• ***Engaging with attendees:*** Participants should be able to actively network with peers, policymakers, and investors to raise awareness about their projects and foster opportunities for collaboration or funding.

• ***Utilizing multimedia and interactive tools to tell their solution story:*** Participants should be able to use visuals, videos, or interactive demonstrations to help capture the audience's attention and effectively convey the project's value proposition.

"The Solutions Lab greatly helped our project in many ways beyond just providing financial support. Our attendance at COP28, gave us access to a global platform where experts and policymakers discuss climate issues. This allowed us to connect with influential figures in the climate field, opening doors for potential partnerships. Moreover, we linked our project with relevant industry conferences, expanding our network and giving us opportunities to engage with peers and experts, thus enhancing our project's impact."

- Solutions Lab Participant

Developing partnerships to enhance team initiatives

• ***Collaborating with governments:*** Partnering with government agencies or ministries can provide access to resources, funding, and policy support to scale up projects and address regulatory challenges. The projects also contribute to governments in showcasing initiatives that are in line with the countries' priorities in climate governance.

• ***Engaging with corporate partners:*** Working with corporate partners can offer funding, expertise, and access to markets or distribution channels. Collaborating with companies aligned with the project's goals can also enhance credibility and scalability.

• ***Creating alliances with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society groups:*** Partnering with NGOs can provide grassroots support, community engagement, and access to local networks and resources. These organizations can also advocate for the project's objectives and help mobilize resources.

• ***Collaborating with academic institutions:*** Partnering with universities or research institutions can offer access to expertise, research facilities, and student talent. Collaborative research projects or knowledge-sharing initiatives can advance the project's impact and innovation.

A Solutions Lab: It's all about the process!

The process for selecting climate solutions and the young adults leading them is a fundamental component of the Lab. Therefore, it is vitally important to clearly lay out criteria and parameters to properly evaluate applications before they are received. While all solutions will be innovative and community-oriented, some will also include traditional business components, hence the assessment criteria should also examine market and revenue prospects and long-term viability. In past experiences, the Solutions Lab utilized the following parameters to evaluate and select projects:

General criteria:

• ***Relevance:*** The proposed idea is aligned with the priorities established by the Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) and national/local climate policies, including capacity needs and gaps related to the effects of climate change. It is imperative that the proposed solution seek to solve a specific climate change problem and respond to the needs of customers, residents, citizens, or practitioners.

• ***Feasibility:*** The proposed idea is described in detail and corresponds to the proposed budget. This requires a clear list of capital sources and balanced investment support to leverage the resources required for the startup initiative.

• ***Financial sustainability:*** At this stage, proof of initial funding and a timeline for cost recovery at a commercial scale within a 3-year span must be provided.

• ***Stakeholder engagement:*** The proposal includes a clear plan to engage with a wide array of external stakeholders and demonstrates that the team is led by women or prominently includes them. Additionally, it should ensure diversity and inclusion, with a particular focus on vulnerable groups.

• ***Gender-transformative approach:*** On the Lab team side, the selected solutions should be

gender-balanced, considering women not only as a vulnerable group adversely impacted by climate change, but as the main actors responding to the crisis. It is important to create an environment that enables the tackling of structural gender issues in favor of long-term, systemic changes and ensures women's participation through the whole process.

Procedural criteria:

• ***Pitch:*** Does the pitch effectively communicate the team's unique skills, experiences, and value proposition? Does the pitch effectively convey the team's passion, enthusiasm, and commitment to the issue or initiative? Are there specific examples or anecdotes included in the pitch to highlight the team's relevant achievements or contributions?

• ***Creativity / human touch / originality:*** Does the presentation incorporate creative elements or storytelling techniques to engage the audience and leave a memorable impression? Does the presentation achieve a human touch by emphasizing personal experiences, emotions, or connection with the audience? Are there original ideas or approaches presented that set the pitch apart from others and showcase the team's creativity and innovation?

• ***Clarity and attractiveness:*** Is the pitch structured in a clear and organized manner, with a logical flow of ideas and key messages? Are visuals, such as slides or multimedia elements, used effectively to enhance clarity and visual appeal? Does the pitch use language that is accessible and easy to understand, avoiding jargon or overly technical terms?

• ***Time efficient:*** Does the pitch effectively convey key information and messages within the allotted timeframe? Are unnecessary details or tangents avoided to ensure the presentation remains focused and concise? Are time management strategies employed to maximize efficiency and ensure all important points are covered?

• ***Demonstrated ownership:*** How does the team demonstrate a sense of ownership and responsibility for the issue or initiative being presented? Are there examples of proactive problem-solving, internal motivation, or leadership demonstrated throughout the pitch? Does the team express a clear vision for how they intend to drive the success of the project or idea?

• ***Power of the message:*** How impactful is the core message or main idea conveyed in the pitch? Does the pitch effectively communicate the significance, urgency, or relevance of the issue or initiative? Are there memorable quotes, anecdotes, or calls to action that leave a lasting impression and inspire the audience to act?

Industry-specific criteria:

• ***Replicability:*** Can the solution be replicated? To what extent can innovative initiatives led by non-state actors be replicated or scaled up in other regions or communities facing similar climate challenges? Are there transferable lessons and best practices that can inform broader efforts to mobilize grassroots climate action?

• ***Inter-institutional coordination:*** Does the solution demonstrate institutional collaboration and support? Does it impact progress toward the Sustainable Development Goals and coordinate with other local processes, projects, and initiatives?

• ***Specific targets:*** Does the solution have clear, measurable targets? Do these targets align with broader climate goals and objectives, allowing for progress tracking and performance evaluation? By establishing clear and measurable targets, the initiative can enhance accountability, transparency, and effectiveness in addressing climate challenges, ensuring tangible outcomes and impact.

• ***Cultural transformation:*** Does the solution actively promote behavioral changes among individuals and communities, aiming for deeper systemic shifts through the adoption of new values and beliefs? How effectively does it address underlying social norms, attitudes, and cultural practices related to climate change mitigation and adaptation? Moreover, will the solution encourage collective action, innovation, and sustainability?

Commercial Solutions:

• ***Competing products/services:*** This criterion evaluates the presence and nature of existing products or services in the market that address similar needs or offer comparable solutions. Evaluators will consider how the proposed project distinguishes itself from competitors, its unique selling points, and any potential advantages it may have over existing offerings.

• ***Price point:*** Does the proposed project's pricing strategy and align with market expectations and competitor pricing? Evaluators will analyze the proposed pricing structure, affordability, and potential for competitiveness in the market.

"We recognized that we were targeting our customers but not our clients. This realization led us to make significant changes to our project, including a shift in our client focus and business model. Instead of solely targeting individual consumers, we decided to pivot and focus on partnering with businesses. This strategic decision allowed us to reach a larger audience and have a more significant impact."

- Solutions Lab Participant

• ***Defendable risk:*** This criterion examines the project's ability to mitigate and manage risks effectively, including market-related, technological, and regulatory risks. Evaluators will assess the robustness of the project's risk management plan.

• ***Key resources:*** This criterion looks at the availability and utilization of the key resources necessary for the successful implementation and commercialization of the project. This includes human resources, financial resources, intellectual property, technology, partnerships, and any other critical assets required to execute the proposed solution effectively. Evaluators will consider the adequacy, accessibility, and strategic utilization of these resources to achieve the project's commercial objectives.

What types of projects does a Solutions Lab support?

The Solutions Lab supports the implementation of climate solutions led by young leaders seeking to advance local climate actions. These solutions can range from community sustainable agriculture to business support services to promote climate-informed investment, and they can emerge from different individuals and partners and at different stages of project ideation, design, and implementation. Here are some selected examples from the first cohort of projects:

GUATEMALA

Design and implement participatory coastal conservation and restoration strategies

The project targets the protected area of the Guatemalan Pacific coast, the second largest remaining mangrove biome in the country. The main objective will be to implement community-led, participatory strategies for the resilient management of plastic waste.

© Rocío Silva/Impulsouth.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

Develop new tools and services to monitor and evaluate climate adaptation actions

This project seeks to strengthen local capacity to measure the impact of and report on climate change adaptation actions led by municipal governments, through the implementation of a system of indicators to reveal the most pressing needs of each jurisdiction. This will inform the prioritization of actions, in the medium term, to more efficiently invest funds allocated to climate adaptation and resilience initiatives.

NIGER

E-commerce platform for forest products

The E-Himma platform promotes forest products (everything that comes from bush trees), honey, and agroforestry through education and the sale of products. Forest products have always been neglected, their benefits and different uses are not well known, and yet they are a source of soil fertilization, food, and wealth creation, and they aid in the fight against soil erosion and climatic changes throughout the year. The objectives are to maximize the benefits of forest products and agroforestry to the population through information, training, awareness, networking, and sale of products. E-Himma is composed of a general website and a shopping page (launched in 2019), a voice server for information, awareness, and assistance, and agroforestry fields or "witness fields" to serve as a model, especially to employ women who do not have access to land.

© Mariama Abdoulaye Ide/Impulsouth.

NIGER

Build the capacity of health professionals on climate-sensitive diseases

The new Center of education and research on Climate Change and Health "Magaria Project Niger" will build the capacity of health professionals on climate-sensitive diseases through awareness, training, and access to reliable data through a digital platform. The center will be coordinated by a multidisciplinary team of physicians, agroecologists, and environmental lawyers.

© Zeinabou Maman Noura/Impulsouth.

MADAGASCAR

Climate data and support services for businesses

In line with Madagascar's national climate change policy documents, the main objective of the Climate Change Center for Businesses is to strengthen the resilience of the Malagasy private sector to the effects of climate change. The center will be hosted by the Madagascar chambers of commerce and industry. It will provide data on climate change for businesses and will serve as an incubator for climate action entrepreneurship and training. The center will collaborate as well with other institutions like the Ministries of Environment, Transport, Trade, and Agriculture and trade unions.

MADAGASCAR

Promote ecosystem services and strengthen local livelihoods

The objective of the project is to promote beekeeping in rural areas, foster healthy ecosystems, and increase the wellbeing of vulnerable rural communities. Local communities will benefit from the income generated by the sale of honey while protecting the forests. The pilot phase of the project will start in a rural beekeeping village in the highlands of Madagascar that has also been affected by deforestation. The villagers interested in starting beekeeping, current beekeepers, and the company 'Ikiray Miel de Madagascar' will be involved in the project.

UGANDA

Set up a community-based laboratory for sustainable agriculture

The community-based laboratory for sustainable soil management technologies will provide training for rural communities on soil testing, organic fertilizer production, biogas installation, and climate smart agriculture. It will also sell organic fertilizer ingredients.

ZAMBIA

Enhance food security in drought-prone areas

The project's objective is to improve food security by promoting the growing of drought-resistant sorghum varieties and adding value by processing of sorghum grain into flour and sorgflakes.

Capacity-building: a training sequence

The Lab aims to equip young climate leaders from the Global South with the skills and capacities to develop, implement, and report the progress of climate actions in their countries. To effectively produce concrete climate actions, capacity-building must be an ongoing process that goes beyond imparting knowledge and information about recent climate change trends. The Solutions Lab model allows participants to apply, test, and build on training content and provides them with the resources to put their ideas into practice via their solutions at the local level. Thus the Lab's capacity-building process converts information into individual knowledge that spurs public and private institutions into action.

Boot Camp

A series of suggested training modules can be delivered in person or virtually to prepare participants to develop their ideas and design their solutions as well as provide an overview of climate issues.

Module 1. The Global Climate Agenda and National Priorities:
This module should cover the intersection between global climate goals and the specific priorities of individual nations to promote a better understanding of the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). By examining the relationship between the global climate agenda and national priorities, these sessions can highlight the importance of aligned and integrated approaches to addressing climate change on both the global and local scales.

Module 2. Role of Non-State Actors and Innovation for Climate Action:
Here, the focus will be on the pivotal role played by non-state actors, including businesses, civil society organizations, and local communities, in driving climate action and innovation. This module highlights the significance of innovation in advancing climate solutions, showcasing examples of disruptive technologies, social innovations, and collaborative platforms that empower non-state actors to take meaningful action against climate change.

Module 3. Regional and Local Priorities:
This overview of climate challenges and priorities faced by different regions and localities around the world will also showcase diverse approaches to climate adaptation and mitigation at the regional and local levels, emphasizing the importance of context-specific strategies and bottom-up engagement in addressing climate change effectively.

Module 4. Climate Finance:
This module explores the critical role of climate finance in supporting climate action, particularly in the global South and vulnerable communities. It will discuss various sources of climate finance, including public funds, private investments, international aid, and innovative financing mechanisms such as carbon markets and green bonds. Furthermore, it covers the challenges and opportunities associated with the different funding sources to foster access to climate finance.

Module 5. Solution Refinement Workshops:
Here, the focus will be on interactive workshops designed to facilitate dialogue, collaboration, and co-creation of climate solutions. These workshops will bring together solution teams and stakeholders, including clients or practitioners, researchers, and community members, to identify how to improve their business plans. Through hands-on activities, group discussions, and participatory exercises, participants will engage in problem-solving and decision-making processes aimed at testing their ideas and improving their solutions.

Module 6. Deployment and Measurement:
In this final phase, the emphasis will be on the implementation and evaluation of solutions, possible strategies for scaling up successful interventions, leveraging partnerships, and mainstreaming climate action into policy and practice. This final module highlights the importance of monitoring, evaluation, and learning mechanisms to assess the effectiveness, impact, and sustainability of climate initiatives over time.

"There are development plans for my country that I discovered through my research during the program, but above all I mastered Niger's NDC to my participation in the program. Which makes me feel very comfortable when I speak in front of partners."

- Solutions Lab Participant

Be inspired, innovate, and grow

Working in peer groups and with mentors (see Figure 2 below) accelerates learning by encouraging the exchange of ideas, the discussion of common challenges and barriers, and the sharing of milestones during the implementation of solutions. It provides an opportunity to measure progress and find support among colleagues.

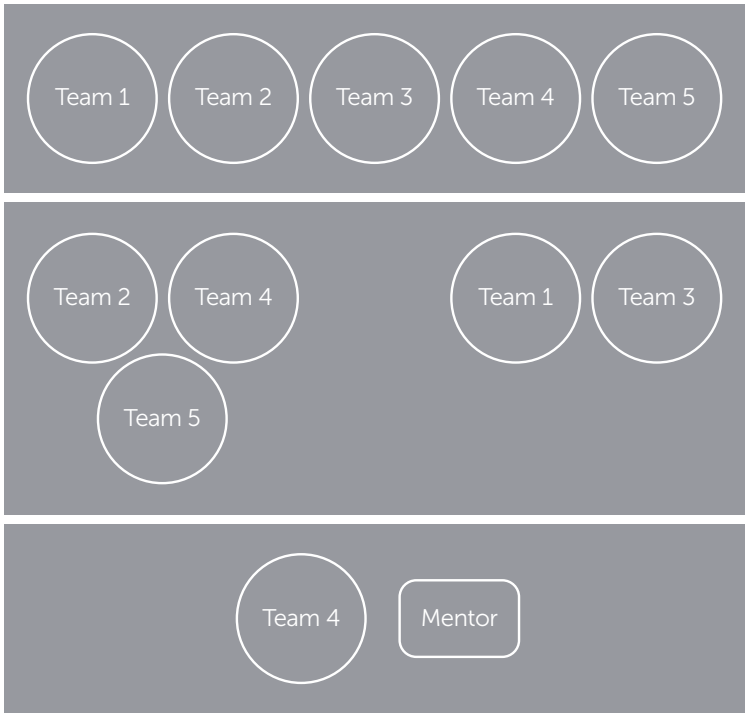
As part of the capacity-building process, both the mentors and the Solutions Lab team can cluster solution teams to work side-by-side on their initiatives. This is not only a key step in creating a strong network, but also critical to promoting the long-term sustainability of the solutions. Each cohort will vary, and teams can be clustered by industry, skill-building requirements, or complementarity. This clustering will also help the Solutions Lab team engage more closely and effectively with the solution teams.

Figure 2: Strategies for working in peer groups and mentors

All the teams begin as a single cohort. This allows for learning the foundational elements of climate challenges, project design, and business.

Many of the teams and/or individual participants are divided into working groups to carry out peer-to-peer learning exercises and hands-on training activities.

Few of the teams will work independently with an expert mentor to resolve specific technical issues or market challenges.



Moving beyond the design and internal testing process, the solution teams can engage in activities focused on market and stakeholder engagement. This is in line with the sequence for launching a solution, consisting of four key stages:

1. Product Innovation is a phase of development where solution teams are focused on improving their ideas or converting prototypes into new designs, adjacent products, or new solutions altogether. Good product innovations are best informed by potential customers and solution teams will be challenged to reflect deeply on the customer feedback and what it means in terms of pivoting or improving products/solutions.	**2.** Coaching and Business Development take place throughout the incubation period of six months. Coaching will be responsive to specific issues because it is expected, based on past experiences, that startup teams will be at different stages in developing their solutions.
3. Demo Day where each solution team presents a detailed implementation plan and pitch for seed funding from potential investors. This stage helps teams refine their messages and communicating their solution to help them attract seed funding.	**4.** Customer Discovery is a phase where teams test their ideas in the market, ideally using prototypes. Solution teams are expected to engage as many potential customers as possible and document feedback that will be helpful for product innovation.

"The Solutions Lab furnished me with information regarding the necessity of validating my solution, which ensured that I conducted thorough validation research which included community engagement and ground and surface water assessment making certain that my solution was tailored to the specific context or community needs. This led to the change in design of the final solution."

- Solutions Lab Participant

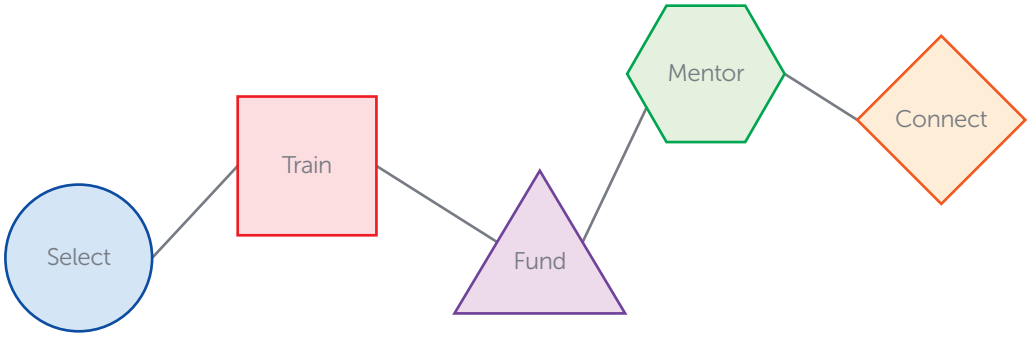
Sequences for deploying solutions

The Solutions Lab model fosters climate solutions using a flexible and rapidly adaptable approach. The types of initiatives that the Lab is designed to support may vary from innovative startups to active projects at various stages of implementation or scaling up. As a result, there can be multiple sequences for recruiting, training, and supporting individuals, teams, and enterprises, all with the shared objective of advancing climate solutions. The following are three examples of possible sequences to illustrate how the steps can vary and be configured in different ways.

Model 1 – Wide open call and investment in selected participants

In this sequence, individuals or teams are carefully chosen based on their potential to implement their solutions. Following selection, the capacity-building process equips participants with the necessary skills and knowledge to deploy their solutions. At the next stage, they unlock access to seed funding to accelerate the implementation of their ideas into actionable projects. Subsequently, mentors continue to guide and support participants, and finally, visits to international climate forums are facilitated, providing solution teams at more mature stages of their projects with networking opportunities to expand their reach and impact (see Figure 3).

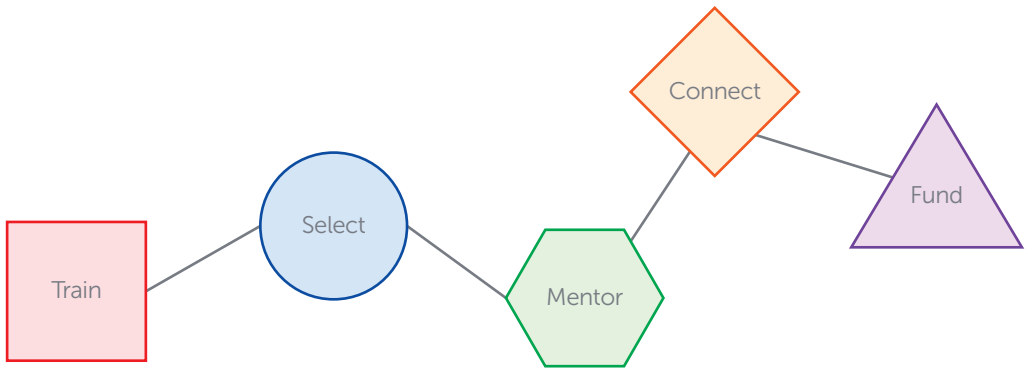
Figure 3: Wide open call and investment in selected participants model



Model 2 – Wide open training and investment in selected participants

This alternative, streamlined sequence is designed to foster innovation and impact, with a larger cohort of participants undergoing initial boot camp training to hone their skills and knowledge. A small subset of these participants undergo a selection process to invest in those with the potential to drive their solutions forward. Following this, mentors provide guidance and support, leveraging their expertise to nurture the solutions at earlier stages of design before they access funding. Strategic connections and networking opportunities offer participants the opportunity to refine their project before funding is provided to support implementation and scaling. This is a more risk-averse investment model and ensures that mature projects unlock capital toward the end of the process (see Figure 4).

Figure 4: Wide open training and investment in selected participants model



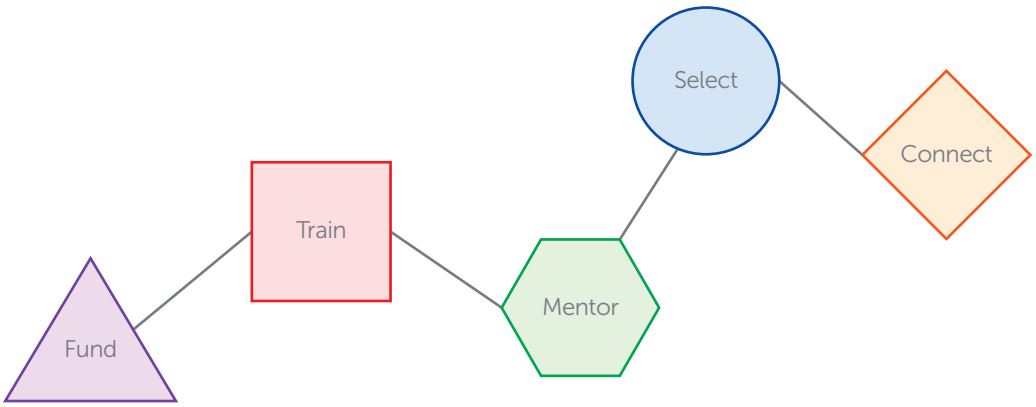
"For a long time now, I've wanted to invest in the field of climate change, but I haven't had the courage to do so, and it's this self-confidence that has been brought to me by Solution Lab's training courses.
What's more, the mentoring also enabled me to learn more about my field of investment, entrepreneurial practices in the recycling sector and how to set up a business model."

- Solutions Lab Participant

Model 3 – Selected investments and training through participation

This model features higher risk tolerance. It is a dynamic and accelerated sequence designed to empower individuals and foster collaboration by allowing them to access funding early in the process. After initial investments have been made for developing and jump-starting their solutions, participants go through a boot camp to enhance their skills and knowledge in their respective fields. Then, mentorship and strategic networking opportunities equip them to scale up and scale out their solutions. This model (see Figure 5) applies a rapid, business-centered approach to viable solutions which, in the process, are enriched and become better aligned with specific climate targets. In this approach, initial observable change encourages and motivates continued action.

Figure 5: Selected investments and training through participation model



The Lab's strategic benefits for solution teams

Ensuring alignment with local challenges

- Recognition and alignment of projects with national climate priorities
- Market-centered approach for climate solutions
- Simulation of the deployment of the solution in local space

Supporting project design

- Shaping the project to address or target climate challenges
- Ensuring the project is tailored to the local context while informed by international best practices
- Refocusing the business to expand from customers to clients and partners to amplify impact
- Enabling a transition from innovation to financial profitability

> "The Solutions Lab team provided knowledge on the various adaptation projects that are currently being implemented in my country. This greatly facilitated my understanding of the extent of impact that my solution had in Zambia."
>
> - Solutions Lab Participant

Building capacities

- Providing customized workshops
- Facilitating individual coaching
- Boosting personal agency and literacy on climate issues

Participating in conferences

- Engaging in international policy and governance forums
- Creating a network with international partners
- Connecting to relevant industry conferences
- Engaging with peers and experts

The role of the Lab team in enabling action

- Ensuring observable impact of investments at early project stages
- Supporting the refinement of the solutions through iterative dialogue
- Encouraging testing of ideas as a continuous form of experimentation
- Achieving a proof of concept with the teams

Co-creating and sharing stories to inspire climate action

- Developing stories to inspire climate action
- Creating a media kit for participants

"The Lab's contribution was crucial at multiple stages of the project, but their involvement was particularly pivotal during the initial design phase and later during the refinement and validation stages.

Initial Design Phase: The Lab's input was instrumental in shaping the foundational design concepts of NatureApp. Their expertise and guidance helped us clarify our project goals, identify key features, and establish a roadmap for development. By providing valuable insights and best practices, the Lab's early involvement laid a solid groundwork for the project's success.

Refinement and Validation Stages: As we progressed with the development of NatureApp, the Lab continued to play a critical role in guiding us through the refinement and validation stages. Their feedback helped us address emerging challenges, iterate on design improvements, and validate our assumptions through user testing and feedback sessions. The Lab's ongoing support and mentorship provided the necessary guidance and reassurance to navigate complex technical and strategic decisions, ensuring that NatureApp remained aligned with its objectives and user needs."

- Solutions Lab Participant

Final recommendations for donor organizations

As different organizations increase their efforts to support local climate solutions that will support communities' ability to navigate the urgent challenges posed by climate change, it is important to foster truly innovative solutions and support climate entrepreneurship. The design of a Solutions Lab requires openness of the donor organizations to try novel methods and assessment criteria to support entrepreneurs. A particular effort in flexible access and use of the financial resources will enable flexibility and adaptability of the solutions as they evolve and scale up and out.

In this section, we present final recommendations for donor organizations seeking to maximize their impact in advancing climate resilience and sustainability through solutions lab model. These recommendations are rooted in the experiences of the lab coordinators and the teams that led the activities of the Solutions Lab. They serve in the recognition of the essential skills and support structures needed to empower climate entrepreneurs to succeed. From the importance of providing locally informed capacity-building activities to accompanying teams in their effort to secure long-term financial commitment, the suggestions outlined here aim to encourage donors to try novel and riskier approaches that can help catalyze meaningful change.

1. **Design the program with a capacity building and experimentation sequence which is informed by and with the participants.** Acknowledging the importance and need of delivering on foundational skills in business planning, financial management, marketing, and pitching, donors are necessary for participants to ensuring long term viability of the solutions. This will require investing in diverse learning platforms, from workshops to mentorship programs, to equip climate entrepreneurs with the tools they need to thrive.

2. **Place front and centre a focus on engagement and visibility of the solutions.** Recognizing the value of community and collaboration, donors are urged to increase their presence at forums, events, and conferences, amplifying the visibility of climate entrepreneurship and reinforcing its significance on both the local and the global scale.

3. **Leverage resources and donor organization networks to assemble a business ecosystem to support the teams.** Opening the organizations network of excerpts, partners, and collaborators to support the different teams and solutions will contribute to both building a community of practice, but also acerating the implementation of solutions, promoting new partnerships and increasing the opportunities for success.

4. **Maintain flexibility and reduce administrative burden on participants.** Creating a Solutions Lab requires prioritizing opportunities for participants to convene, share experiences, and catalyze new ideas. This is necessary to help create momentum, but also to make progress in areas of opportunity as they arise, experimentation and flexible models outside of routine programming results-based designs will allow for emergent innovation and supporting local leaders.

5. **Plan for animating teams' solutions to sustained partnership with the teams.** Ensuring the longevity and effectiveness of initiatives like the Solutions Lab requires securing long-term financial support and assembling multidisciplinary teams equipped with diverse expertise. The donor organization will need to foster collaboration across fields and work towards helping the teams secure robust resources, this requires refining the business skills and business model of the climate solutions.

These are some starting points to consider, at the heart of the Solutions Lab model is novelty and southern led leadership. The donors design for meaningful interventions will benefit from allowing complementary and co-production with and for local participants to inform the formation of their programing and investment plans, a paced approach that relies on trusting local innovators and supporting a network of entrepreneurs is central to tackling the most pressing challenges of our time with creativity, resilience, and impact.

impulsouth

GLOBAL COOPERATION
FOR CLIMATE ACTION

Fundación Avina | FLACSO ECUADOR | UNU ViE | IDRC · CRDI Canada