



Insights from funder survey on social innovation labs

September 2014

Collaborating to accelerate social impact

Context for this survey

CONTEXT

- Traditional approaches to complex problem solving are insufficient to fully realizing our ambitions to solving the most challenging problems faced by poor and vulnerable people.
- Innovation labs provide a useful approach. They offer a unique process that involves diverse stakeholders in a given field, creating an environment conducive to innovation and experimentation.
- The following materials include the results from a brief survey conducted as part of a joint project of The Bridgespan Group and The Rockefeller Foundation to understand funder perspective on social innovation labs.

OBJECTIVE

- Gather input from key leaders and funders in the sector on their current understanding of and experience with social innovation labs

About the funder survey on social innovation labs

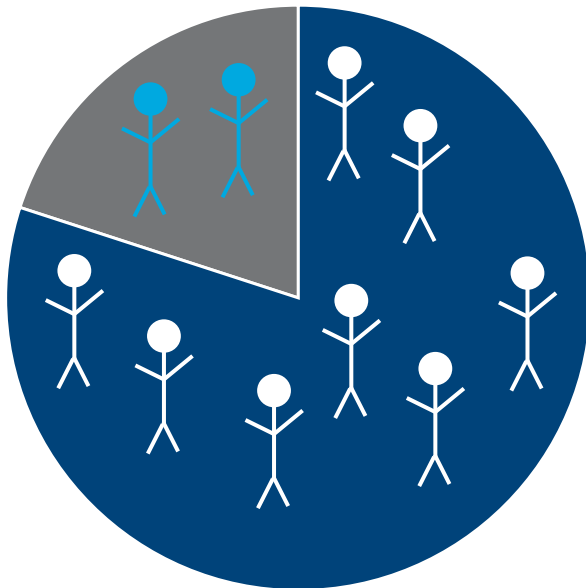
- Survey responses were received during July 2014
- Received responses from 23 funders
- The Bridgespan Group acknowledges this is too small of a sample from which to draw assumptions on the funder landscape more broadly. Further, given that outreach efforts were focused on funders with an explicit focus on innovation, we believe the group may have been biased in their understanding of labs
- However, the data does reveal interesting insights and perspectives that can help inform and spark conversations to advance the understanding and use of social innovation labs

Key insights from the funder survey

- Most of the funders surveyed (~80%) are **familiar with the concept of social innovation labs**
- Funders believe the greatest benefit of labs is around **engaging diverse stakeholders**, followed closely by **rapid prototyping** and **new strengthened networks**
- Less than 50% of funders have **engaged labs directly**
 - A majority of the outputs from work with labs centered around the development of a service or strategy solution; the primary activities funders participated in were one or more workshops or convenings
- Among the reasons why funders have not worked with labs, they cited primarily **a lack of understanding** about what they would get out of the work
- The majority of funders have a **desire to learn more about labs** and highlighted specific information needs, including an understanding about **what labs actually do**, how labs **differ from each other** and **proven success stories and outcomes** that can be expected from working with labs

The majority of funders surveyed understand the concept of labs and identified several key benefits

MOST FUNDERS (~80%) WERE FAMILIAR WITH SOCIAL INNOVATION LABS...



...AND THEY CITED THREE PRIMARY BENEFITS OF WORKING WITH LABS

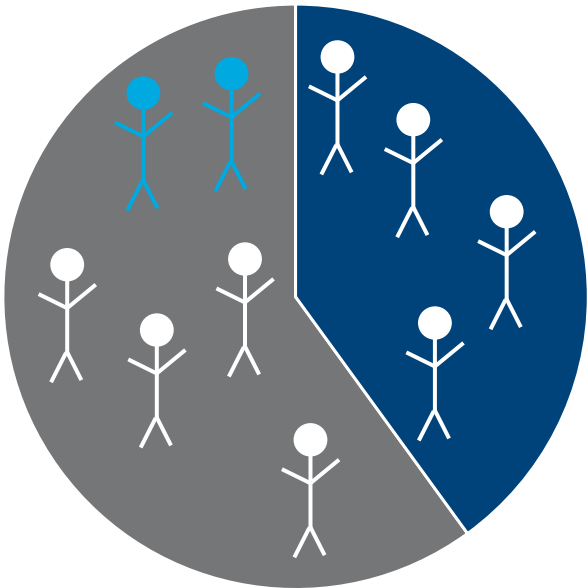
Diverse perspectives gained through input from end-users and other stakeholders in the system

Rapid prototyping, co-creation, fast testing and refining of solutions

New, strengthened networks through relationships with lab participants or other stakeholders

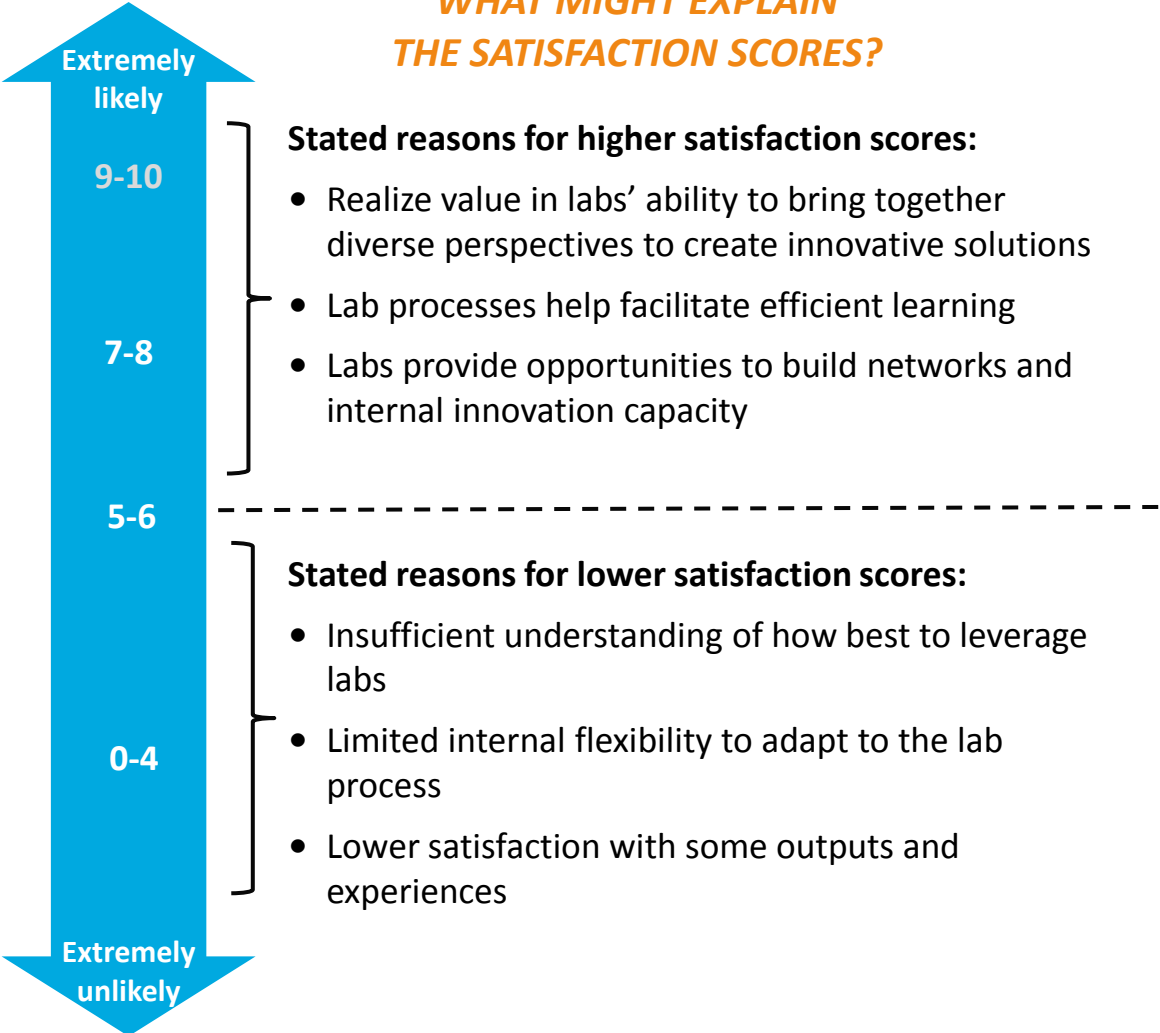
40% of labs surveyed have engaged directly with labs; their experiences have varied

HALF OF FUNDERS FAMILIAR WITH LABS HAVE WORKED DIRECTLY WITH LABS...



...ON AVERAGE FUNDERS ARE “SOMEWHAT LIKELY” (6/10) TO RECOMMEND LABS TO COLLEAGUES

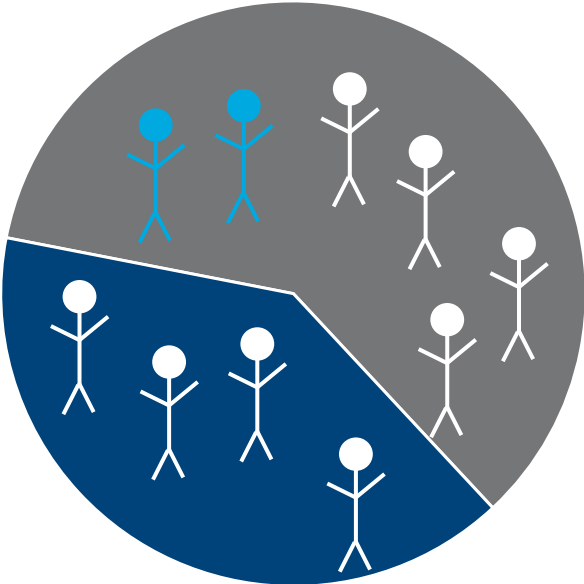
WHAT MIGHT EXPLAIN THE SATISFACTION SCORES?



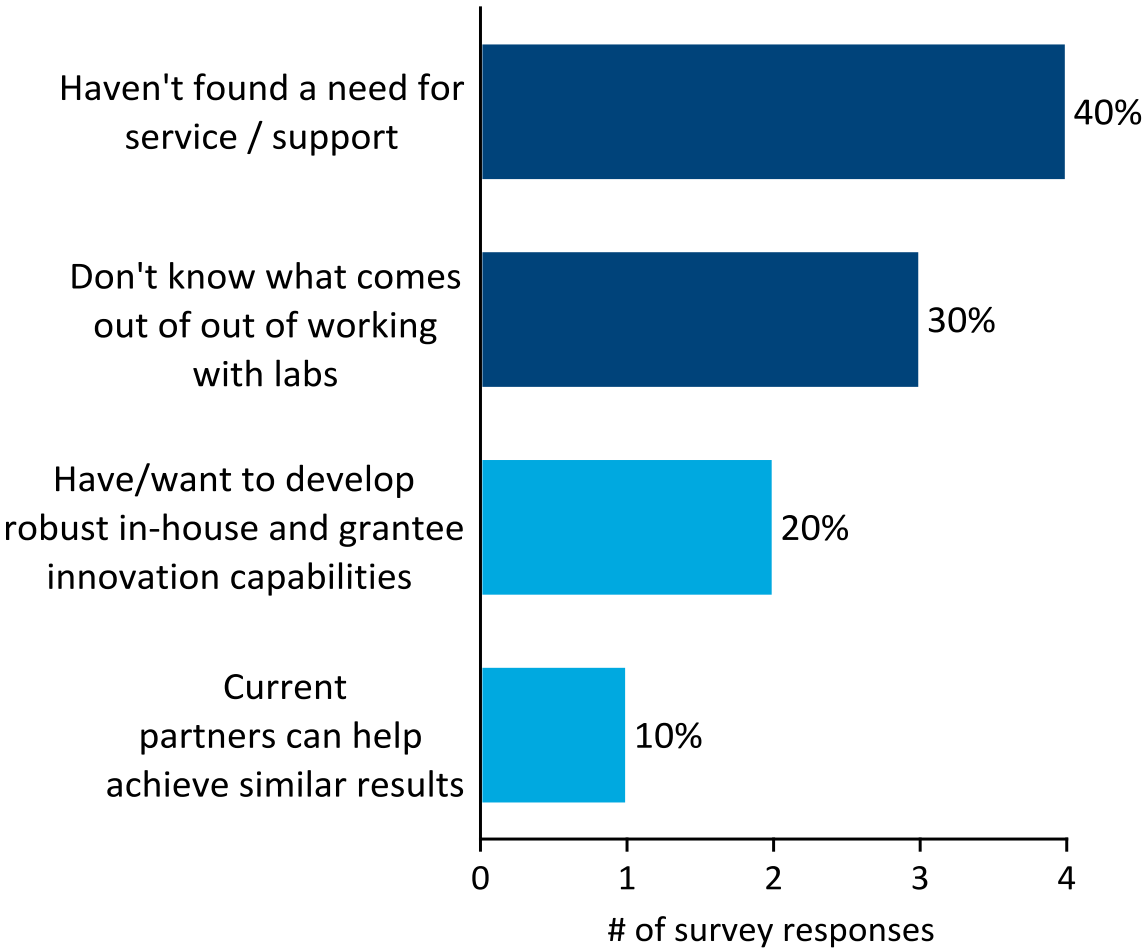
Note: N=18

Lack of need for or understanding of labs' value proposition are the primary reasons organizations aren't engaging labs

HALF OF FUNDERS FAMILIAR WITH LABS AREN'T ENGAGING THEM DIRECTLY IN WORK...



...THE PRIMARY REASONS WERE A LACK OF NEED FOR OR UNDERSTANDING OF LABS' VALUE PROPOSITION



Note: N=18; please note that this 50% includes those who are engaging labs indirectly or not at all in their work

~70% of respondents have a desire to learn more irrespective of their level of familiarity with or use of labs

FUNDERS WANT MORE INFORMATION ON THE PRACTICE AND IMPACT OF LABS

General understanding of labs (e.g., when and how to use labs)

*“What **types of problems** are social innovation labs best equipped to help answer?”*

*“Are all labs **product-oriented**?”*

*“What **differentiates** labs from one another?”*

Impact and results (e.g., goals and populations reached)

*“What is the **measurable impact** of labs (qualitative and quantitative)?”*

*“What are **examples of work** done through labs that has reached scale?”*

Thank you and please join the conversation on the Innovation Lab Insight Center hosted by Bridgespan and The Rockefeller Foundation

WEBSITE

[Bridgespan.org/Publications-and-Tools/Innovation-Labs-Insight-Center.aspx](https://bridgespan.org/Publications-and-Tools/Innovation-Labs-Insight-Center.aspx)

NEWSLETTERS, ALERTS, TWITTER POSTS & RSS FEEDS

[Bridgespan.org/Newsletters](https://bridgespan.org/Newsletters)

CONTACT US

Nidhi.Sahni@Bridgespan.org

ABliss@Rockfound.org