

EVPA CoLab AWARD

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DELA: A GLOBAL ACCELERATOR, CO-CREATED BY IKEA SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND ASHOKA

SUPPORTING INNOVATIVE, SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS TO DEEPLY ROOTED SOCIAL CHALLENGES

Submitted by Ashoka and IKEA Social Entrepreneurship

Dela aims to maximise social impact focusing on livelihoods, equality and inclusion by accelerating the movement of social entrepreneurship globally.

Dela supports social entrepreneurs to strategize for systems change, and offers them the chance to test their strategies in collaboration with business experts, who, in turn, bring learnings back to their organizations.

The Dela accelerator comprises of 3 main phases:

1. Strategy Phase: 12 participating social entrepreneurs (SE) are paired with Ashoka systems change strategy facilitators, and a team of Thought Partners (IKEA co-workers and other Ashoka partners) to create a robust system change strategy and a plan to implement it.
2. Summit: the SE present their updated strategies to a group of handpicked leaders from the global social innovation and corporate sector who provide feedback and offer connections and resources to support them. SE also connect with each other as a cohort to reflect on leadership challenges linked to Dela or beyond
3. Scoping & Experimentation Phase: those SE that find it relevant, continue their journey in Dela by selecting an element of their newly updated strategy that they would like to further plan, test, or start implementing. During Scoping, they identify the resources needed to do so and test their assumptions, before entering Experimentation where they work alongside a lean team of Experimentation Experts from IKEA and other collaborators.

BACKGROUND

- A. Which **type of organisation** are you (tick all that apply)?
- A Capital Provider (grant maker): An engaged grant maker deploying financial capital and other resources for impact

- An Intermediary: an advisory, capacity building organisation or research organisation supporting capital providers, impact delivery organisations and other stakeholders and/or enhancing knowledge in the impact economy.

B. Please briefly summarise your mission

IKEA Social Entrepreneurship partners with social entrepreneurs across the globe, using forward-thinking business models to include millions of people who are vulnerable and marginalised to live better lives through decent work. Together with our partners and IKEA co-workers, we develop programmes, products and services to scale up social entrepreneurs' businesses and increase their impact

Ashoka identifies and supports the world's leading social entrepreneurs, learns from the patterns in their innovations, and mobilizes a global community to build an "everyone a changemaker world." Ashoka supports this vision through its programs in more than 90 countries, building and amplifying this global movement.

C. Which of the use cases does your practice(s) apply to? Please tick all that apply!

- Open social innovations
- Building impact (investing) ecosystems

D. Which system practice field(s) does your practice apply to? Please select the most relevant (max three).

- Systems diagnostics
- Strategy design
- Collaboration

E. Please give us a brief background 1) what motivated you to act and who initiated the practice(s), inside or outside your organisation, and (if applicable) 2) describe the event that triggered your engagement.

IKEA Social Entrepreneurship and Ashoka are aligned in their vision and commitment to support the social entrepreneurship movement. Both organisations aim to support social entrepreneurs to scale their impact and reach their full potential. Both believe in systems change as an approach to address the roots causes of social challenges rather than their symptoms, to engage a multitude of actors and motivate them to act and enable lasting and effective change.

Starting in 2019, we saw an opportunity to leverage our unique competences in social impact (Ashoka) and business (IKEA) and to build on our shared values with a belief in (social) entrepreneurship, empowering / being there for the many people and building trust between our teams and the entrepreneurs we support together. We co-created an accelerator programme that would offer social entrepreneurs with proven impact and business models an opportunity to not only strategize for systems change, but to take the first step and start implementing their strategies with the support of business experts. Thus, increasing the likelihood of successful implementation.

After a series of sessions between the two partners, a joint Theory of Change was designed and the co-creative journey of the Dela* program began. (Theory of Change document is attached)

*Dela means "to share" in Swedish

THE PRACTICE(S)

F. Briefly **analyse the situation before you introduced the practice**. What contributed to maintaining the status quo and producing (undesirable) results, e.g. resources (or lack of resources), rules (informal and formal), roles (relevant actors from the public, private and social sector, their legitimacy or effectiveness) and/or the kind and quality of relationships (informal and formal cooperation, power dynamics, information flows).¹

SEs with the potential to solve social problems at the systems and frame change level are challenged to find necessary support to do so, resulting in achieving smaller impact despite their full commitment and hard work. At the same time, significant human and financial resources are not used in the most effective way, while social problems remain unsolved

We have identified 4 main underlying systems that keep the problem in place:

1. The **support ecosystem for Citizen Sector (in general)** drives the big problem since: CSOs and Funders lack orientation on systems and frame change as a rule, while at the same time there is little knowledge on systems and frame change as a resource for Social Entrepreneurs, citizen initiatives and funders.

The support ecosystem for Systems and Frame Change Initiatives is quite weak at the moment:

- there is little funding for profound SC and FC initiatives;
 - there is little hands-on support with designing SC strategies, exemplary strategies are hard to find;
 - existing support offers are few, scattered and uncoordinated;
 - there is very little clarity about measuring impact of SC and FC and support for it, therefore confusion among funders and SEs;
 - there is little hands-on support for and exemplary cases for specific pathways to achieve SC and FC
2. **The Citizen Sector and Social Entrepreneurs themselves:** as there is relatively low openness to each other and low readiness for collective action
 3. **System of Storytelling** about social entrepreneurs as it fails to showcase their achievements and potential for larger impact to potential partners.
 4. **Government systems** as they are often unable and unwilling to perceive Social Entrepreneurs as eye-level partners and sources of innovative and effective solutions

Our main focus with Dela is system #1, with a secondary focus on #2 and #3.

G. Please describe the **actual results** you sought to achieve with your practice, **the parameters you sought to influence most**; roles, relationships, rules, and resources and how?

The Dela Accelerator resources social entrepreneurs to grow their impact beyond their organization by (re)defining a systems change strategy towards a system change goal that focuses on one of more elements of the system they are intervening - we use the 5R model to define this goal (resources, relationships, roles, rules, results). How these elements will be affected depends on each social entrepreneur and takes time to assess. Some of the key immediate results from the Accelerator are:

¹ See more details on using the 5R framework (Results, Ressources, Rules, Roles, Relationships) for systems analysis for example here Ashoka [Online Guide on System Change, part 3](#) based on USAIDs Programm Cycle.

- Each SE who completes the program receives around 167h of support from IKEA co-workers and 290h from other experts
- SE reported 86% likelihood to recommend Dela to peers
- SEs changed 54% of their initial strategies. All of them shifted their impact focus from Direct Service to Systemic Impact (on average they report their strategies became 43% more systemic)

By supporting the Accelerator participants in their strategic thinking process, volunteer corporate thought partners gain new insights and agency on social impact and changemaking. This shifts not only the way corporate collaborators regard social entrepreneurs (mindset/rules) but also the relation between the corporate and SE sector (relationships and roles); it becomes more evident that SEs are eye-level, innovative entrepreneurs that can become sources of valuable insights and business partners. Here are some immediate results IKEA co-workers reported from both editions in Dela:

- IKEA co-workers reported 89% likelihood to recommend the Dela II to their peers
- All IKEA co-workers gained new insights in at least one of the following areas: 1) how to work, organize and lead (40%), 2) markets and business models (55%); 3. Systems change (91%); 4) Social Entrepreneurship (84%)
- All IKEA co-workers gained new motivation to do at least one of the following actions: 1) engage colleagues to create positive social impact (72%); 2) create positive social impact at work (93%); 3) solve social problems (63%)

The partnership brings financial resources into the system; we source and select the latest, most innovative and leading social entrepreneurs who are working to improve livelihoods, looking beyond the current take-make-dispose model and focusing on positive society-wide benefits to improve the livelihoods of the many. By receiving a stipend from IKEA Social Entrepreneurship for 3 years, the selected social entrepreneurs are able to focus on their idea full-time and get their venture to a point of sustainability, impact and growth. The stipend is usually the difference between a social entrepreneur moving forward with their innovation or not.

Another painpoint of social entrepreneurs is the lack of support, and often resources, to test their assumptions and updated strategies. This resulted in the design of the Implementation (Dela I) and Scoping and Experimentation (Dela II) phase, that offer the necessary resources and a safe space for Social Entrepreneurs to test elements of their updated strategy, through tapping into the knowledge and resources of IKEA co-workers and other collaborators. Data from Dela I Implementation phase indicate that SE valued the opportunity of continued work on their strategy in a more concrete way with support of experts; SE ratings of readiness to scale towards systemic impact moved grew from 4.3 before Dela I Implementation Phase to 8.4 after the end of Implementation Phase.

Communications for impact. The overall communications goals and objectives of the partnership are listed below. In order to achieve our objectives in line with the Theory of Change we produce content around participating Social Entrepreneurs, their collaboration with co-workers and other content that opens up the rationale of working with a systems change approach and co-creating a programme like this between a big corporate actor and a civil society organisation. We especially want our message to reach social entrepreneurs, the social entrepreneurship sector, other corporate actors, and the internal audience at both IKEA and Ashoka.

- To raise awareness of the partnership and Dela programme to our defined audiences

- To drive better understanding of the uniqueness of Dela and what this brings to system change social impact
- To engage and inspire other corporates
- To share learnings within IKEA and Ashoka

H. Please describe the **intended results** you sought to achieve with your practice and **the parameters you sought to influence most** – if considerably different from the actual results described above.

Beyond the actual results mentioned above, the assumption is that corporate volunteers can apply the newly acquired skills at work - ultimately contributing to IKEA's social and sustainability goals and vision- and society – becoming an agent for change in their community.

This partnership could also act as a model, inviting other corporates to join the social entrepreneurship movement, hence bringing more resources, and creating a deeper dent in the system.

This could contribute to shifting the way social entrepreneurs are viewed by the corporate sector, and contribute to an augmenting integration of social enterprises into the value chain and a spread of ethical, fair practices.

An important part of the programme's theory of change is to share the approach and learnings from the programme. This is to engage and inspire others (social entrepreneurs and other corporates) so they see the benefits of joining or running such a programme and how it can accelerate system change impact. To meet this objective, a number of stories have been produced, along with educational material, impact reports and engagement opportunities to share the learnings.

More on the Dela intended results can be found in the attached Theory of Change document.

I. Please specifically explain the **role other actors and collaboration played** in this practice (if not the main practice itself) and insert a figure that illustrates the main stakeholders and partnerships that play a role in the practice you are presenting here.

Collaboration is at the core of Dela. The program was co-created following a human-centric design approach, based on existing resources, knowledge and expertise from both Ashoka and IKEA Social Entrepreneurship, merging the social innovation and corporate sector.

Collaboration is embedded in the program as well. For example, throughout Dela, a series of Learning Circles and Peer Calls take place, enabling both SE and corporate volunteers from IKEA and the Ashoka network to exchange on their experience, learnings, challenges and support each other grow in their role.

In order to reach the Dela goals, inviting others onboard is key; partners, collaborators and alumni. Some illustrative examples:

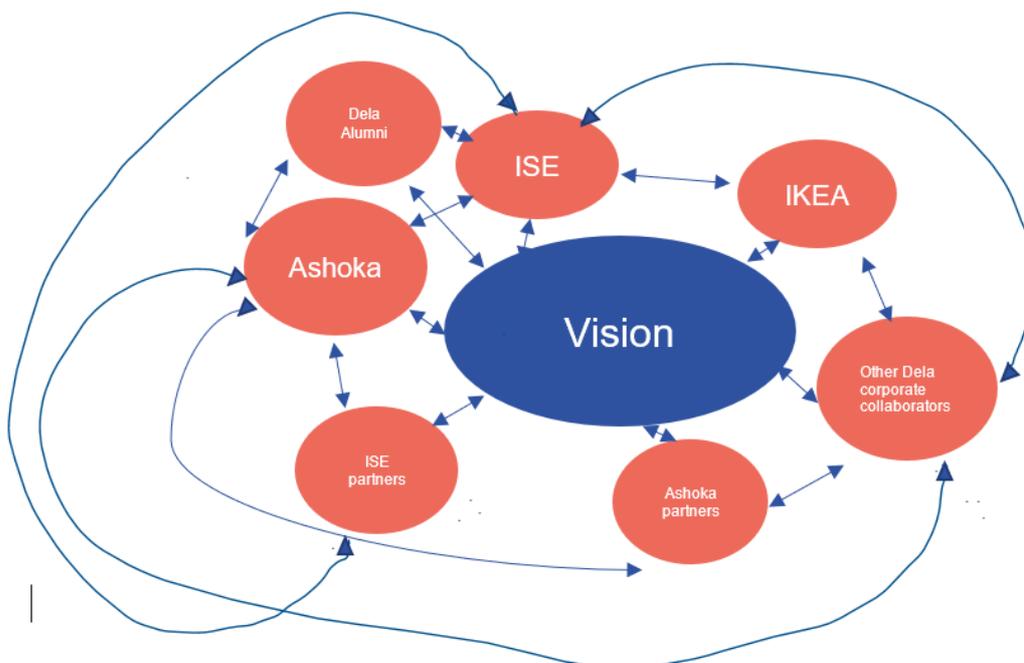
- During the Summit, social entrepreneurs present their strategies to an international group of high-level entrepreneurs, executives and experts from the corporate sector, international organizations, foundations, and NGOs who then engage in deep conversations to help Social Entrepreneurs strengthen their strategies and potentially provide support to implement them.

- Identifying the growing social entrepreneurs' need for tech & digital support beyond what Ashoka and IKEA could offer, Microsoft was invited as a digital collaborator for Dela II.
- Alumni always remain part of Dela, both by sharing their experiences and learnings with the next cohorts, and identifying collaboration opportunities, and remaining in contact with IKEA Social Entrepreneurship and Ashoka.

Collaboration also grows beyond the programme:

- ISE realized their first investment in a SE organization, that of Liisa Smits, Dela I participant
- Dela II participating SE is exploring a collaboration with IKEA business
- There are numerous cases of SE supporting each other beyond program
- Partners offer support and open up their networks to SEs beyond Dela (e.g. 40+ follow up conversations and 46+ connections offered to the Dela II social entrepreneurs by social innovation and business/corporate leaders after the Dela II Summit)

A simplified depiction of the Dela network can be found below:



YOUR INSIGHTS

J. What went well and why? What were the challenges you faced and how did you overcome them? What would you do differently today and why?

- Program outcomes: as described above
- Engagement: the willingness of corporate volunteers to join Dela to work alongside social entrepreneurs and exchange experience and learnings has been a high point of the program, together with their commitment. A key contributing factor has been selection; both in terms of key program partners (vision and values alignment) and in terms corporate volunteers; a structured process was followed, ensuring strong program fit and clear expectations setting.

- Co-creation: the co-creation process between the main two partners, IKEA Social Entrepreneurship and Ashoka has been another highlight, and learning opportunity for both organizations. Here, preliminary work was key: before launching Dela design, a series of vision alignment sessions took place, and resulted in the creation of a shared Theory of Change, that acts as the guiding star of the partnership and program.

In terms of challenges, there is a co-created Measurement, Evaluation and Learnings (MEL) process, that continuously informs and is informed by the program design and implementation. This, results in iterations with the aim better fulfil the program goals and needs of all participants (primarily SE but also corporate volunteers and partners/collaborators).

An illustrative example would be that of the Implementation stage of Dela I:

While participation in the Implementation stage significantly contributed to almost doubling the readiness of SEs to scale towards social impact, data from both SEs and the participating IKEA co-workers indicated some areas of improvement: clear scoping before going into implementation mode, lower dependency on a 1:1 relation between implementation partner and social entrepreneur, bringing in more competences through creating a team around the SE, extending the Implementation phase over longer period of time.

This, resulted in the design of the Dela II Scoping and Experimentation phase in place of the Dela I Implementation stage:

- Optional phase
- 2-month Scoping phase where SE work together with their IKEA Strategy Partner to specify the scope of the subsequent Experiment, identify the necessary resources and timeline and test their assumptions. (Could result in a decision to not proceed)
- 6-month Experimentation phase where SE work together with a lean team of Experimentation Experts from IKEA and Microsoft to further plan, test or start implementing an element of their strategy as scoped in the previous phase

K. Which three pieces of advice would you give to your peers?

- Systems thinking is an essential element for change, but it is often messy and uncomfortable. Make sure this is acknowledged, understood and accepted by all collaborators.
- Collaboration takes time, as it is a complex, highly iterative process, and requires trust. Make sure there are enough time and resources to support your collaborative process. There are online workshops and even organizations that can help facilitate multi-stakeholder collaborations.
- Focus on openness: be prepared to give up control, as this is often the faster (and cheaper) way to scale impact.

FURTHER RESOURCES

<https://www.ikeasocialentrepreneurship.org/en>

<https://www.ashoka.org/en-nrd/content/dela-programme>

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