

Open Eco-Innovation Manual for Circular Economy Enablers





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Open Eco-Innovation Manual for Circular Economy Enablers

Aisha uses waste materials such as fabric remnants, wood, and sponge to kick off trendy accessories line. Dweikat's focus revolved around reviving and sustaining the Palestinian heritage.

Full story: <https://www.theswitchers.eu/en/switchers/wood-fabric-remnants-turn-accessories/>



About this manual

The objective of this document is to develop an open eco-innovation manual to help match companies and public institutions in search of green and circular business solutions with entrepreneur providers using an open innovation approach.

The goal of this manual is to help meet the sustainable innovation challenges faced by private and public companies across different sectors and provide you, as a future open eco-innovation enabler, with an understanding of the processes you will develop to facilitate connections between solutions seekers and entrepreneur providers.

The manual covers the whole corporate venturing process, from engaging solutions seekers and identifying open innovation challenges through to development of the solution.

The main services you should be providing to stakeholders throughout the journey are also considered.

01

Eco-Innovation, Sustainable
Business Strategies, Corporate
Venturing and Open Innovation.

Key Concepts

Eco-innovation

Companies and manufacturers are increasingly recognizing that the current linear “take-make-dispose” production model is generating economic, environmental and social challenges capable of jeopardizing the survival of their business. Companies that continue to operate their businesses as usual face significant risks such as the fluctuation and increase of resource and energy prices, environmental degradation, legislation compliance or incapacity to respond to growing market demand for sustainable products and services.

To address these risks and the future uncertainty they generate, companies need to find alternative solutions that enable them to embed sustainability into their business models and product and services design, thus securing the viability of their business.

Eco-innovation is an approach that aims to respond to environmental and social challenges and take advantage of business opportunities by incorporating changes throughout the company, from business model and strategy to product, services and production design processes throughout the value chain.

By incorporating eco-innovation into their business models, companies will be able to increase their competitive advantage while transforming ecological and social challenges into economic opportunities and reducing environmental impacts.

Eco-innovation types

According to the Eco-innovation Manual of the United Nations Environment Programme, eco-innovation is the development and application of a sustainable business model shaped by a new business strategy based on life cycle thinking and in cooperation with partners across the value chain throughout the company’s operations. Through a coordinated set of modifications and novel product solutions (goods/services), processes, market approach and organizational structure, company performance and competitiveness can be enhanced.

Process eco-innovation

Production processes are cleaned up, significantly improving resource and energy efficiency, saving resources and preventing pollution. Existing processes and technologies are improved rather than transformed.

Product eco-innovation

The innovative solution transforms the main characteristics of the product or service using novel processes and technologies, for example, shifting from conventional to electric vehicles.

System eco-innovation

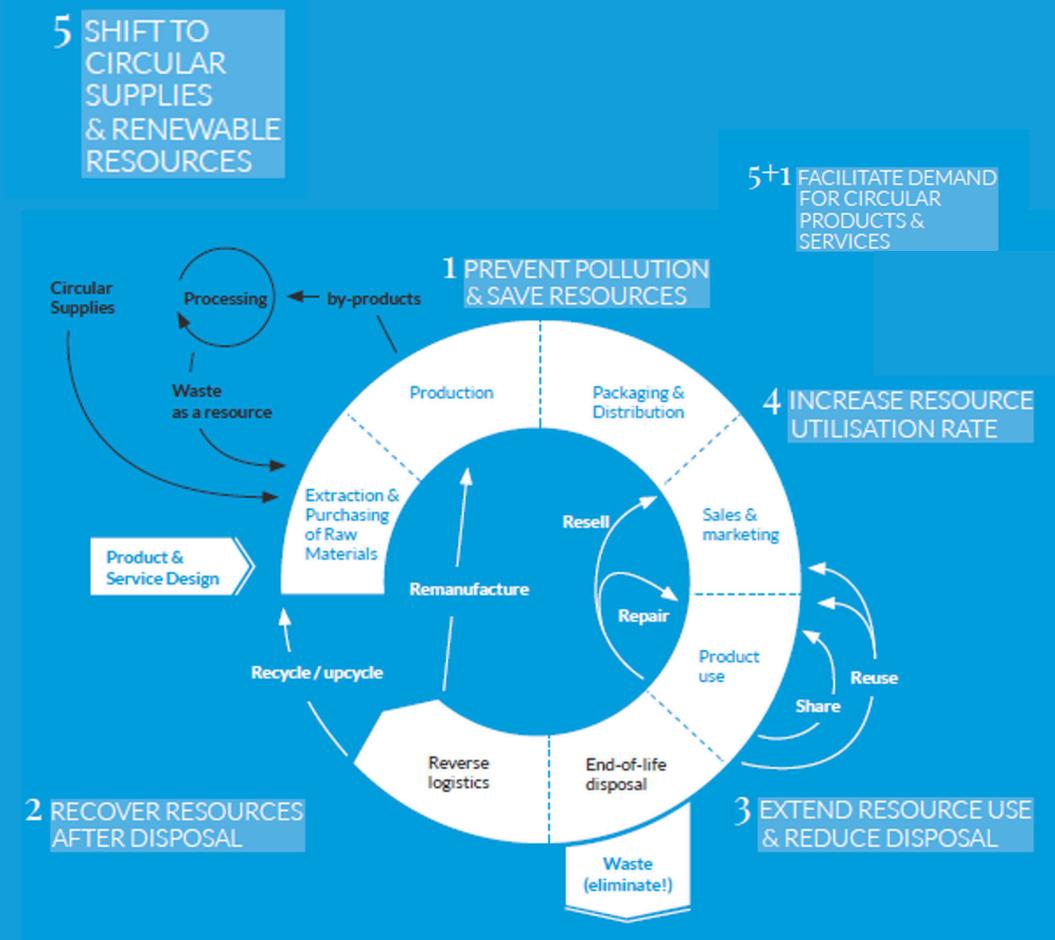
This means the transformation of consumption patterns at system level in the value chain, and requires radical business model innovation. System eco-innovation embraces complex change, usually involving non-technological transformations and various stakeholders.

As these three types or stages indicate, environmental value creation is progressively increased with each eco-innovation stage. The further the company progresses through the stages, the more extensive the changes the company will need to make to its business model. These changes to the business model have greater potential for the creation of environmental, social and economic value.

Sustainable Business Strategies

Based on interdependency between the environment, society and economy, a sustainable business provides viable, innovative products and services which create environmental and social value by applying eco-innovation, life cycle thinking and eco-design approaches.

The adoption of a combination of eco-innovation and life cycle thinking approaches can lead to alternative, sustainable business models for the companies of the future. These business models can be grouped into five main business strategies. According to SCP/RAC's analysis, outlined in the paper "Circular economy business strategies: conceptual framework to guide the development of sustainable business models" (Mosangini & Tuncer, 2020), we have numbered these strategies in ascending order according to resource value retention as well as difficulty of implementation and coordination within value chains, with five indicating the greatest retention value and effort required for implementation and coordination:



Sustainable Business Strategies



Aisha uses waste materials such as fabric remnants, wood, and sponge to kick off trendy accessories line. Dweikat's focus revolved around reviving and sustaining the Palestinian heritage.

Full story: <https://www.theswitchers.eu/en/switchers/wood-fabric-remnants-turn-accessories/>

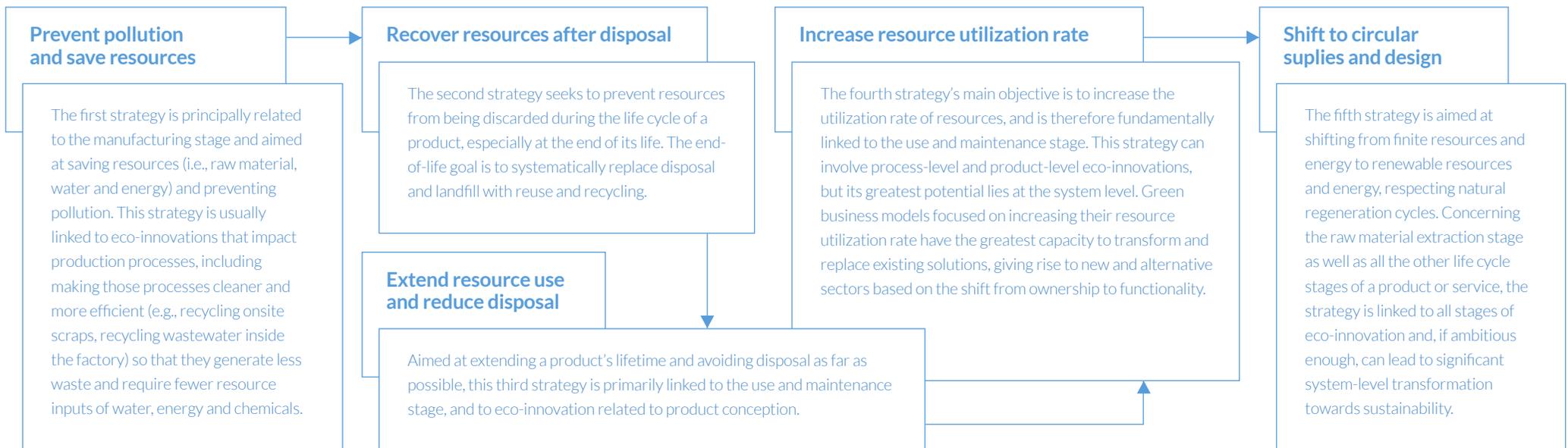


Table 01: Eco-innovation strategies

From the intersection between the three stages of eco-innovation and the circular business strategies, in the table below we identify some of the main eco-innovations available to companies wishing to develop a sustainable business model:

Circular business strategies	Life Cycle Stage	Eco-innovation forms		
		Process-level innovations	Product-level innovations	System-level innovations
Prevent pollution and save resources	Raw materials	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce distance from sources • Increase use of recycled content • Increase recyclability of materials through new technologies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce number of materials and resources used • Reduce amount (weight) of all elements and components 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transform to a business model requiring no extraction of resources (e.g., second-hand business models)
	Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplify the production process • Increase resource efficiency (energy and water) • Reduce waste and emissions generated • Reduce and recycle materials • Produce locally • Use local energy 		
	Packaging		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimize packaging and use mono-material • Use renewable, recycled and recyclable materials • Reduce waste from packaging by standardizing packaging sizes or reducing amount of materials used 	
	Distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement an optimized logistics system • Improve efficiency of transported load by optimizing weight and volume and using stackable product packaging • Choose the most efficient transportation system and vehicles (including fuel renewability) 		

Table 01: Eco-innovation strategies

Circular business strategies	Life Cycle Stage	Eco-innovation forms		
		Process-level innovations	Product-level innovations	System-level innovations
Recover resources after disposal	Production	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply industrial symbiosis practices: waste from one company can meet the resources required by another company 		
	End-of-life		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Separability of components or materials: design for easy disassembly, enable separation of materials Enable easy identification of materials Ensure reusability through collection systems to facilitate recycling, upcycling and energy valorization 	
Extend resource use and reduce disposal	Use and maintenance		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure high product reliability Promote efficient use of energy and energy renewability Facilitate multifunctionality and customization through eco-design Minimize need for processed materials for product function Reduce waste generation during use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transform to a business model that promotes reuse and reselling (e.g., second hand business models) Offer repair and maintenance services Offer remanufacture and upgrades
Increase resource utilisation rate	Use and maintenance			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on functionality instead of ownership: rental or shared use Servitization: offer the product as a service
Shift to circular supplies and design	All life cycle stages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use of renewable energies and bio-based, local and fully recyclable materials in closed loops at production stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All eco-design practices implemented in product design to ensure the highest degree of sustainability possible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slow living products and services with full control over the value chain (slow food brands, slow fashion brands, etc.) New business models: servitization, sharing, repairing, reselling, etc.

Open innovation: a consolidated approach to innovation outcomes

In the age of accelerated change, more than ever companies need collaboration to meet their environmental and social challenges. Globalization, increased competitiveness, the global macroeconomic situation, and the speed at which the market is increasing its domination, are all challenges that individual companies and public institutions are not equipped to address without external support.

The publication of Henry Chesbrough's book *Open Innovation* in 2003 gave rise to a new trend in innovation management based on external collaboration. Since then, companies have been working to use both internal and external know-how to increase the productivity of their innovation efforts.

According to open innovation theory, a company can and should rely on multiple external sources as well as its own internal knowledge sources, and resources to drive innovation.

This innovation model becomes viable when a company acknowledges the many talented professionals and greater knowledge that exist outside the company.

Open innovation is about taking the concept of innovation beyond the internal limits of the company to the point that cooperation with external professionals plays a fundamental role in the company's innovation strategy. Some of the proven results and benefits of open innovation are listed below.



Extending your brand's reach to larger and more relevant audiences

Involving stakeholders in the innovation process makes for larger potential audiences.



Reduction of R&D costs

Relying on external ideas is more economical, as the professionals supplying the ideas are not receiving a salary from your company.



Customer centricity

Involving customers to be involved in the research and development process ensures they understand and like the product before the innovation is implemented.



Risk mitigation

Risk is mitigated by being shared among multiple companies.



Find new talent

Open innovation is a great tool for finding new talent, either to fill existing job vacancies or keep as a close contact in your database.

Companies can collaborate with a variety of stakeholders in their open eco-innovation activities: **universities, customers, entrepreneurs, research centers, public-funded R-D projects, competitors and citizens.**

Of particular interest is collaboration with entrepreneurs, known as corporate venturing.

What is open eco-innovation with entrepreneurs?

Definition and benefits

Open eco-innovation with entrepreneurs or corporate venturing is a means to attract and adopt innovations which assumes that companies can and should use external ideas from entrepreneurs as they look to advance their processes, technologies, products or business models.

Corporate venturing provides a collaboration framework that acts as a bridge between innovative entrepreneurs and companies.

Through corporate venturing, companies develop, sponsor, invest in or collaborate with entrepreneurs to develop innovative products, services, business models or solutions in general. Corporate venturing differs from other open innovation models in that it only works with entrepreneurs who have a clear business model.

Collaborative work between companies and entrepreneurs generates good results. Open eco-innovation with entrepreneurs generates new businesses and improves existing ones at the same time as it strengthens the local entrepreneurial ecosystem.

Corporate venturing benefits

Corporate venturing offers a variety of benefits for both companies and entrepreneurs:

For companies

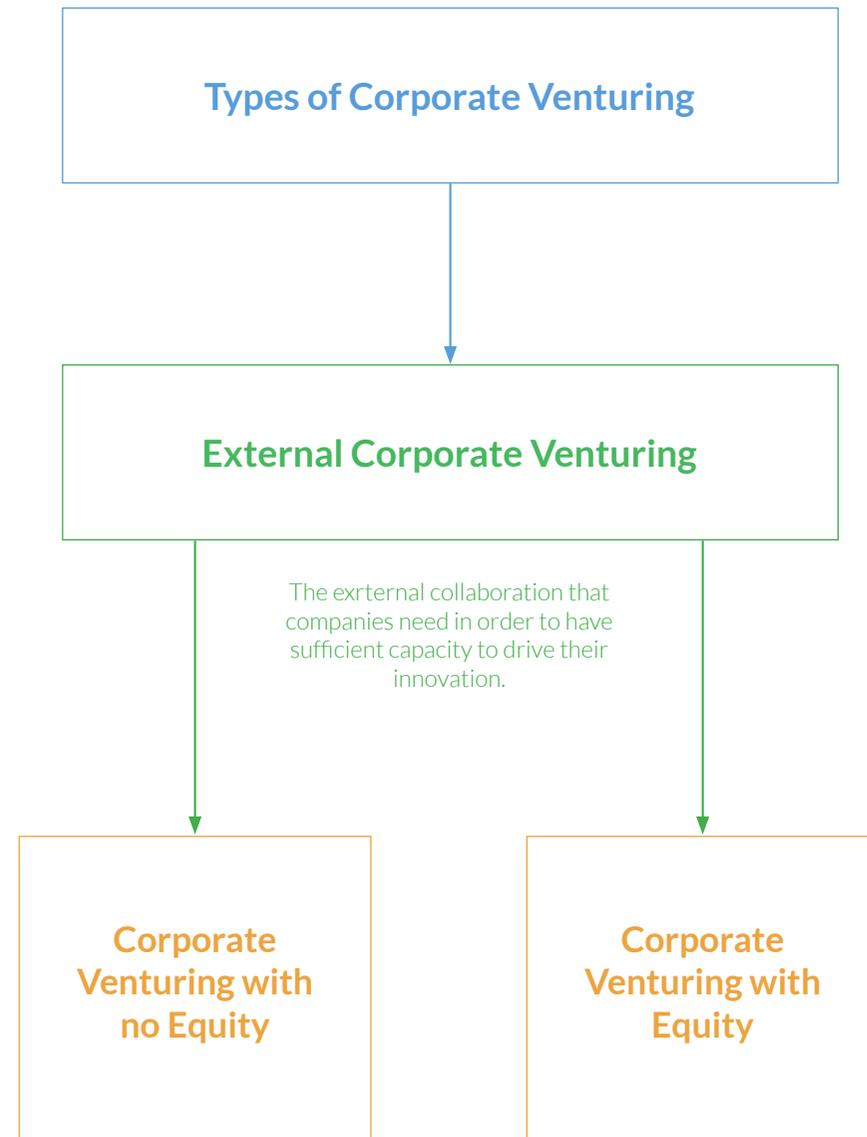
- Exploration of new products, processes and business models quickly and cheaply
- Leverage of new ideas into new, more sustainable markets and meet the demands of a changing customer base
- Integration of new disruptive technology
- Greater options to diversify their business
- Achievement of new capacities by incorporating new ways of working and doing things

For entrepreneurs

- Access to resources such as capital, talent and management know-how
- Access to a large customer base
- Management and marketing expertise, strategic direction
- Access to industry expertise
- Access to breadth and depth of technology
- Established business processes
- Involvement with a prestigious brand, stable financial standing, network of connections and a developed product ecosystem

Types of corporate venturing

Corporate venturing offers a wide range of tools companies can use to come up with disruptive innovations and adapt to the different needs of their eco-innovation strategies. However, there are 2 fundamental types of company-entrepreneur engagement, as shown below. Companies can opt for either or both types at the same time.



Corporate venturing with **no equity**:

In these initiatives, companies seek above all to create collaborative platforms with entrepreneurs, rapidly develop and test “proof of concepts” (an early model of the final product, service, process or business model they will eventually develop) in real environments to assess their possible impact and benefit for the venturing company.

Benefits of this approach for the company and the entrepreneur include:

- Faster access to know-how;
- Discovering the possibilities of new technologies, business models, products, etc.;
- Speedily resolving company challenges with new ways of working that the company’s employees are not yet familiar with.

Initiatives linked to corporate venturing with no equity might follow a two-stage process as follows:

- A first phase in which short term collaboration agreements are drawn up between the company and entrepreneur to prove the value of the collaboration for both sides;
- And a second phase, the “venture client” process, whereby the company contracts the entrepreneur’s product or service in the event of a successful

To initiate collaboration between both actors, as an enabler you can join forces with companies to launch innovation challenges, events or hackathons. These initiatives will help companies get in touch with entrepreneurs interested in solving their eco-innovation challenges.

Having matched the solutions seeker with the entrepreneur, together with the company you will offer specific support to develop the solution. This support can take the form of incubation and acceleration programmes that seek to create a learning environment in which entrepreneurs co-develop the solutions with support from the company including mentors, external experts, machinery and physical co-working spaces.

This manual aims to define the process through which you will support companies to collaborate with entrepreneurs to develop and implement solutions through innovation.

Corporate venturing with equity:

When companies assume the risks inherent in a transaction involving an equity stake, this is known as corporate venture capital (CVC) and means that the company makes a direct investment in the entrepreneur or invests in investment funds for that purpose.

In either case, the commitment is made in two ways:

- Acquisition of a minority stake, without acquisition of control of the company
- Acquisition of partial control

Corporate venture capital pursues both strategic and financial goals. Strategically driven CVCs aim primarily to increase the company's sales and profits, whether directly or indirectly, by making deals with entrepreneurs that complement their offering or allow them to enter new markets, identify acquisition targets and access new resources.

Financially driven CVCs invest in new companies for leverage. This is often achieved through investment exits such as initial public offerings or the sale of a company's stakes to interested parties.

This type of corporate venturing initiative has proven to be expensive in relation to their success rate, when analysed on financial results alone.

For this reason, collaboration methods involving no investment and which offer greater flexibility (i.e., corporate venturing without equity) have grown in popularity in recent years.

02

Types of Eco-Innovation, your role on creating eco-innovation and creating an innovation system.

Open eco-innovation challenges: problems seeking creative solutions

Within the framework of a corporate venturing initiative with no equity, a challenge is an established problem, the solution to which is of value to a company. By identifying it, the entrepreneur helps the company to address their pains and gains.

Innovation challenges are problems requiring creative solutions and active solution solving. In general, innovation challenges are found in environments of uncertainty. In other words, the degree of knowledge around the problem is either low, or very high until saturation is reached, from which point on a creative approach is needed.

As we have already seen, eco-innovation challenges are driven by concern for dwindling resources, the environment and social welfare. Launching innovation challenges involves leveraging ideas, concepts and products into achieving economic viability through environmentally and socially aware design and practice.

Sustainable innovation is disruptive because it can lead to improved business models and processes, streamlined resource flows, reduced waste and costs, and the creation of completely new market segments, making it harder for companies reluctant to embrace sustainability to defend the status quo.

Launching an eco-innovation challenge, then, means creating a call for solutions with the potential to resolve the specified sustainability problem or need.

Challenges can be launched individually or jointly by two or more companies under a partnership agreement. In these cases, the process will be the same but the objectives of the partnership and the needs of all stakeholders must be taken into account.

To successfully launch an eco-innovation challenge, the call should clearly identify:

- 01** The objectives of the call
- 02** The context of the environmental and/or social problem (e.g., why the challenge is important, unsuccessful solutions already tried by the company, or unmet needs of related users)
- 03** Opportunities and barriers
- 04** Types of expected solutions

Typically, solutions to these challenges can come in multiple forms:

- 01** Creative concepts and ideas
- 02** Prototypes
- 03** Technological solutions that require an adaptation or pivot to be able to meet the company's challenge
- 04** An entrepreneur with a consolidated product that directly resolves the problem defined in the innovation challenge

Types of eco-innovation challenges:

Eco-innovation challenge addressed

According to the five circular business strategies and the type of eco-innovation (process, product or system), we find many eco-innovation challenges that companies could address.

Go to Table 1: Eco-innovation Strategies to see eco-innovation challenges that could potentially be met by companies.

Open Challenges

Typically these are sector-specific challenges designed to meet a massive transformational objective within an industry.

Example: “How might we transport goods from retailer to destination in a way that is compatible with diverse retail systems, delivers ease and convenience for customers, and reduces environmental impact?”
Beyond The Bag Challenge – free challenge from IDEO.
This challenge aims to identify innovative new design solutions that serve the function of today’s single-use plastic retail bag, providing ease and convenience for consumers while striving to lessen environmental impact.

User-centred innovation challenges

These are challenges focused on solving an unmet user need that has been previously identified and even validated with the users themselves.

Example: “How to improve the quality of healthcare provision to premature babies?” is the challenge that brings the pharmaceutical company Chiesi into collaboration with freelancers and entrepreneurs every year in Spain under their NeoStart incubator programme.

Technology-oriented challenges

These challenges typically originate in R&D departments with very technically complex needs.

- A very well-known example is Netflix’s “i-Prize” challenge from 2006, in which the company offered a million US dollars to whoever could make their online recommendation engine 10% more accurate.
- Another example in the circular economy field is the search for technical solutions addressed to a specific problem. In the case of Levi Strauss, the company sought solutions for recycling or reusing mixed plastics and flexible packaging with a high barrier.

03

Types of enablers, how to be one of them and how to create an innovation ecosystem.

Your role in creating an open eco-innovation ecosystem

The term “innovation ecosystem” is used to describe the various players, stakeholders and community members whose contribution is critical for innovation.

Within corporate venturing, the ecosystem mainly consists of entrepreneurs (to explore business models), customers (to understand their needs), and research centres and universities.

By creating participation in an innovation ecosystem, companies can create an active flow of information and resources to turn ideas into reality. They can manage their corporate venturing activities autonomously or they can work with enablers (service providers) that have their own innovation ecosystems with the potential to enrich the companies' open eco-innovation initiatives.

As an enabler you provide both companies and entrepreneurs with extra added value, including:

Enablers are actors who have an innovation ecosystem through which they can support companies and entrepreneurs in their eco-innovation processes, providing resources, know-how and services and facilitating the collaboration between both actors. In other words, an enabler is an outside agent that connects companies with entrepreneurs.

- 01.** Understanding of the corporate venturing process and how it works, and creation of new relationships between entrepreneurs and companies
- 02.** Innovation knowledge for every stakeholder: helping them to get to know innovation methodologies and tools.
- 03.** Access to a strong eco-innovation ecosystem (e.g., start-ups, universities, hubs, accelerators and companies)
- 04.** Lobbying on behalf of each of the stakeholders involved in the ecosystem
- 05.** Brand awareness for both entrepreneur and company
- 06.** Market access for entrepreneurs
- 07.** A digital platform for companies to share their challenges and entrepreneurs to promote their solution

Types of enabler

An enabler can present in many forms.
Here are some examples:



**Private or public
accelerator and
incubator**



**Public sector
agency**



**Private
industrial
cluster**



**Research
centre or
university**



**Venture
capital firm**



**Business
angel
investor**



**Private
equity firm**



**Professional
service firm**



**Chamber of
commerce**



**The
Government**



**Think
tank**



**Consulting
firm**



**Other
corporations**

To be a good enabler you should:

Have a skilled team and proven process, with a great understanding of:

- corporate innovation processes
- corporate venturing processes
- the needs, pains and gains of both entrepreneurs and companies in a collaboration
- sector-specific knowledge
- life cycle thinking and eco-design

Have a highly accessible glocal (global + local) and curated corporate venturing ecosystem, with an established network of entrepreneurs, companies and investors.

Have the capacity to leverage other companies' resources and be capable of lobbying other companies.

Have the tools, resources and capacity to build a brand strong enough to be able to create awareness of the innovation challenges launched by the companies.

Have the capacity to participate in the capture of funds for innovation projects.

Operate with agility:

- collaborate with ease in the activation of corporate innovation processes

Own or have the capacity to use key infrastructure:

- spaces to facilitate collaboration between companies and entrepreneurs, create networking events and company coworking spaces, among others

Creating an innovation ecosystem

From the intersection between the three stages of eco-innovation and the circular business strategies, in the table below we identify some of the main eco-innovations available to companies wishing to develop a sustainable business model:

<p>Secure revenue model:</p>	<p>Establish a series of key partnerships with key stakeholders that will allow you access to entrepreneurs, new technology and technical solutions, talent and know-how. In general, stakeholders will allow you to generate the desired output of the company innovation processes between companies and entrepreneurs. These key stakeholders can be:</p>	<p>Create an entrepreneurial ecosystem team by involving renowned experts, including investors, entrepreneurs or consultants</p>	<p>Create a solid network of mentors, coaches, investors and industry experts capable of supporting the activities of the corporate venturing ecosystems</p>	<p>Develop a unique entrepreneur data base or directory to facilitate connections between companies and entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>Use the following means to generate awareness of the topic to attract companies to the ecosystem:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In the case of public ecosystems, the funds will come from government departments and agencies in the fields of innovation, internationalization or local economic development. These ecosystems are aligned to a local (e.g., Barcelona Activa), regional (e.g., Climate KIC in Europe) or national innovation strategy (e.g., Ignite Sweden, founded by Sweden's Innovation Agency and the Swedish Energy Agency). In case of private ecosystems, there are a series of options: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-profit private associations, such as Start-Up Nation Central, in which revenues are a mix of public subsidies and fees paid from companies using the services of the ecosystem. Private foundations, such as Ship2B, in which revenues are secured via sponsorships and use of services. Private companies specialized in promoting financial investments in entrepreneurs. Some countries have specific legal specifications for this type of private enabler. An international example is Startup Mexico, legally incorporated as a "SAPI de CV", meaning "limited corporation promoting variable capital investments". 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> University hubs. Here the goal is to capture ideas, talent and providers of solutions to company challenges. Enterprises. The goal of this collaboration is to launch a solid flow of innovation challenges to the entrepreneur community. Public Institutions. Partnerships with public institutions are also a key element, for many reasons. Through public institutions you can: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> use public spaces for events launch public innovation challenges receive public funding promote their city as an innovation hub Scientific communities and technology centres. By connecting with the local scientific community, you will be able to provide solutions to technical challenges. 				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Success stories Training and inspirational sessions Networking events Digital communication

04

How to reach out to companies and how to formalize the relationship.

Engaging companies or public entities

One of your key tasks in creating your innovation ecosystem will be to attract and engage companies interested in solving an eco-innovation challenge through open innovation.

But how do you do it? In this chapter you will find some tips and tricks on how to create and formalize the relationship between you and the company.

Once you have identified some companies that might meet with these “must-have” criteria, it will be time to contact them and start to engage with them.

First Steps:

Before contacting a company, you must consider a few things that will enable you to engage with the company and launch your future open eco-innovation initiatives.

Every company, sector, industry or country is very different, so we will now lay the groundwork for some basic characteristics you should look for in a company before attempting to establish a long-term relationship:

Willingness to eco-innovate:

The company should have at least set a clear path for their future projects/products/services, with a desire to innovate and openness to new ways of doing things. If the company has an innovation department, it is very important that they have the backing of a management commitment.

Recognize importance of long-term sustainability:

As you will be launching eco-innovation challenges, the company must understand the importance of sustainability and be committed to launch challenges aimed at directly solving sustainability problems.

Be open to engaging and establishing new relationships with external stakeholders

The company must be willing to interact and accept advice from external sources (especially entrepreneurs).

How to reach out to companies

The first stage is to identify companies potentially interested in eco-innovating and grab their attention.

If you don't yet have a strong network or you're getting into a new sector, you could start by contacting business associations and chambers of commerce. Then you could prepare and organize networking events and invite the companies you are interested in making contact with.

Another way to find clients is to identify them individually by taking part in events or even do research on LinkedIn. Choose the method that suits you best, the key here being to channel your inner networker.

There are plenty of things you can offer. Just use your imagination!

Remember, though, that it's not all about receiving. The companies you engage with must also think about what they have to offer. Make sure they are committed to sustainability and eco-innovation as a new business strategy. Through cooperation between you and the companies you engage with, success for one equals success for all.

To grab their attention, you will have to clearly explain what open eco-innovation with entrepreneurs is, as well as the benefits to them and the service offer you'll be providing. To do so, you should create an attractive narrative based on the set of services described in this open eco-innovation manual:

01. Access to an eco-innovation ecosystem
02. Mentoring and expert services
03. Technical and sector-specific knowledge
04. Events and workshops.

Other complementary services you could provide include:

01. Access to a regional business eco-innovation community to create connections and facilitate new business.
02. Involvement in other innovation projects.
03. Access to innovation webinars and training.
04. Provide office space to allow company members to be closer to the entrepreneur ecosystem.
05. Conduct innovation tours exclusively for company members in other interesting innovation ecosystems.
06. Create an online community for companies to connect with entrepreneurs, exclusive to members of the ecosystem.

Once you have identified the added value services you could offer, and you have a commitment from the company to launch an open eco-innovation challenge, you should draw up an agreement in which you set out the following:



Now you are ready to launch the open eco-innovation challenges with the company!

How to formalize the relationship:



Objectives of the collaboration.

You should have set a clear objective for the collaboration, which must align to the company's future eco-innovation projects.



Roles and responsibilities for each of the stakeholders.

The company, or at least one representative, should be involved in the whole collaboration process. You must also establish your respective roles and, as the enabler, you should clarify the services you will be providing.



Duration of the collaboration.

Identify the stages of the process during which you will be collaborating with each other, taking the objectives achieved into account.

05

The time has come to provide value for both entrepreneurs and companies.

A methodological framework for eco-innovation enablers

The time has come to provide value for both entrepreneurs and companies. Follow these stages to launch an eco-innovation challenge and find the right solution to the company's sustainability problem.

Each stage is structured as follows:

Understanding:

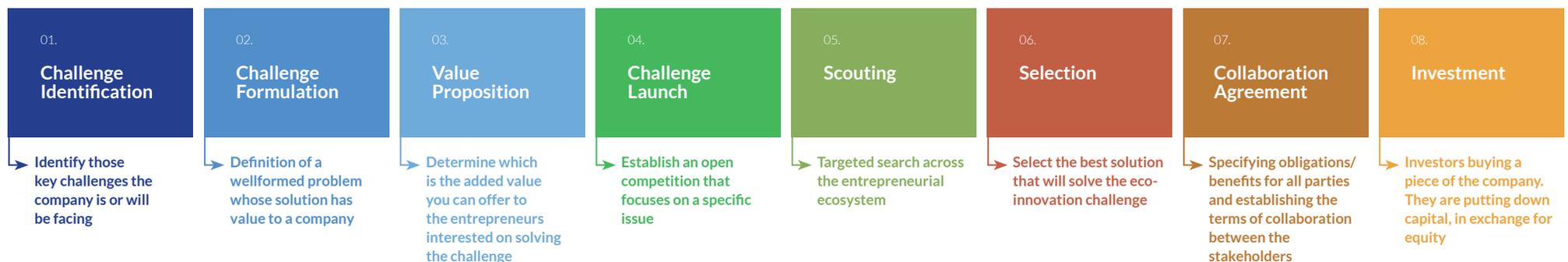
Description of the core services that must be offered at each stage.
Explanation of the overall objective of the stage.

Processes and tools:

Detailed explanation of the process you must follow at each stage, as well as by the tools you might leverage to make the stage a reality.

Associated services:

Introduction to the services associated with the processes and tools. These add value to the overall process and to all the stakeholders involved in it.



Stage 01: Challenge Identification

Identify the company's sustainability challenges

a) Understanding investment

How to identify challenges and your role in the process.

b) Processes and tools

Identify the challenges, categorize the challenges and prioritize the challenges.

c) Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the company's needs: Mapping challenge services and Mentoring services.

a.

Understanding challenge identification

How to establish the terms of the agreement

Companies have many eco-innovation challenges which come and go as circumstances arise. What you must do is manage these correctly, but how?

Your role

You will support the company in identifying the eco-innovation challenge to be launched.

b.

Processes and tools

Your process will follow three stages:

I. Identify the challenges. First, you will have to find out everything you can about the company: their needs, their main objectives, and how they can adapt to the external circumstances that might be impacting them.

II. Categorize the challenges. Group ideas by concepts, relate them to each other and make lots of mind maps.

III. Prioritize the challenges. Once you have categorized the challenges with the company, you must now consider how to prioritize them.

I. Identify the challenges

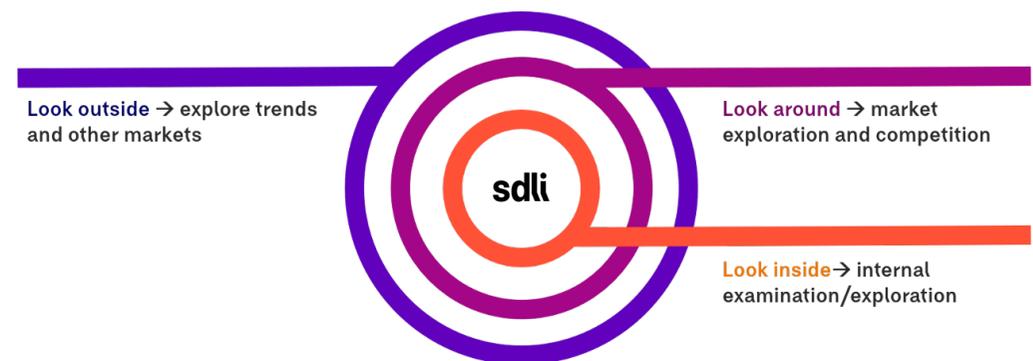
The Triple Look Tool

The “triple look” is a methodological approach that will help you and the company identify the key challenges faced by the company, now and in the future. You will do this by looking:

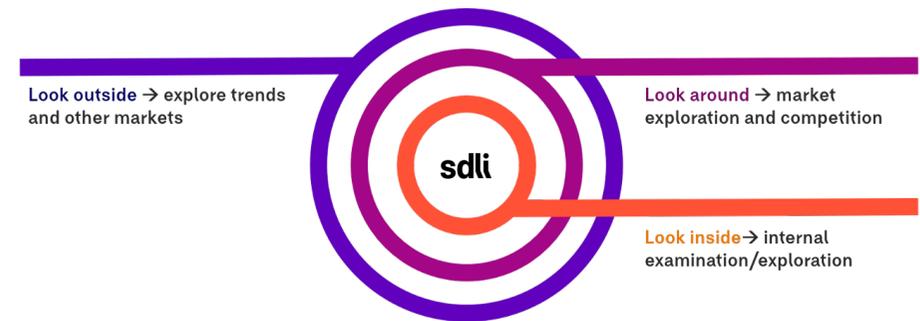
Inside. Problems, goals and or improvement opportunities within the company’s business model.

Around. User needs and trends within the company’s industry.

Outside. Exploring trends from elsewhere, from other industries or other regions of the world, that a company could use to innovate in their own industry.



The Triple Look Tool



Look Inside:

Looking inside is one of the best ways to identify problem-based challenges. It refers to all the elements linked to the operations of the company and its business.

This can be done by looking at:

- Incidents or problems identified by the workers themselves.
- The degree of achievement of the company's objectives.
- KPIs for management, processes and resource utilization.
- Eco-design and life cycle assessments, two key tools in a circular economy

By doing this exercise you will identify the internal bottlenecks that are stopping the company from achieving its goals and objectives.

Look Around:

By looking around, a company can identify elements related to their more direct stakeholders, mainly customers and users of the company's products and services.

This section includes everything from the customer, through suppliers or public bodies, to the company's competitors.

Look Outside:

Looking outside will help us identify social, market, environmental and technological trends that could affect the future company's business model.

This section includes trends and other markets and sectors that may have "nothing to do" with the company.

Looking outside our own context allows us to broaden our point of view, giving it a richer and more varied perspective. Doing this exercise is the best way to generate new opportunities through inspiration. The study of trends, the science of foresight and the study of other fields and disciplines are some of the most relevant aids to "looking outside".

References of interest:

[Gartner trend reports](#)
[SDLI's innovation radar \(in Spanish\)](#)

Foresight agencies:

www.psfk.com
www.springwise.com
www.trendhunter.com
www.coolhunting.com
www.trendwatching.com

b.

Processes and tools

Your process will follow three stages:

I. Identify the challenges. First, you will have to find out everything you can about the company: their needs, their main objectives, and how they can adapt to the external circumstances that might be impacting them.

II. Categorize the challenges. Group ideas by concepts, relate them to each other and make lots of mind maps.

III. Prioritize the challenges. Once you have categorized the challenges with the company, you must now consider how to prioritize them.

II. Categorize the challenges

Group ideas by concepts, relate them to each other and make lots of mind maps. The idea is to group the inputs into groups by categories, so that at the end of the process you are left with a list of different categories related to the company's interests (picked by you and the company).

You can categorize the challenges according to the circular business strategies and the eco-innovation forms presented in **Table 1: Eco-innovation strategies**.

With this list you can now begin to prioritize challenges and decide which are most important or most relevant.

b.

Processes and tools

Your process will follow three stages:

I. Identify the challenges. First, you will have to find out everything you can about the company: their needs, their main objectives, and how they can adapt to the external circumstances that might be impacting them.

II. Categorize the challenges. Group ideas by concepts, relate them to each other and make lots of mind maps.

III. Prioritize the challenges. Once you have categorized the challenges with the company, you must now consider how to prioritize them.

III. Prioritize the challenges

Once you have categorized the challenges with the company, you must now consider how to prioritize them, using the following questions:

- 01.** What are the most important challenges for the company?
- 02.** Which of the challenges can we get straight to work on, and which do we not yet have the tools for?
- 03.** Which of the challenges do we prioritize to work on?

Prioritization matrix

You can use the prioritization matrix to prioritize the challenges by combining the two following criteria:

Business impact.

This refers to the level of impact that implementation of the solution will have inside and outside the company.

Urgency.

This refers to the urgency of the need to find a solution to the challenge faced by the company.

Other criteria that can be used to prioritize challenges:

Alignment to strategic objectives.

Refers to how well the challenge aligns to the company's strategic goals.

User impact.

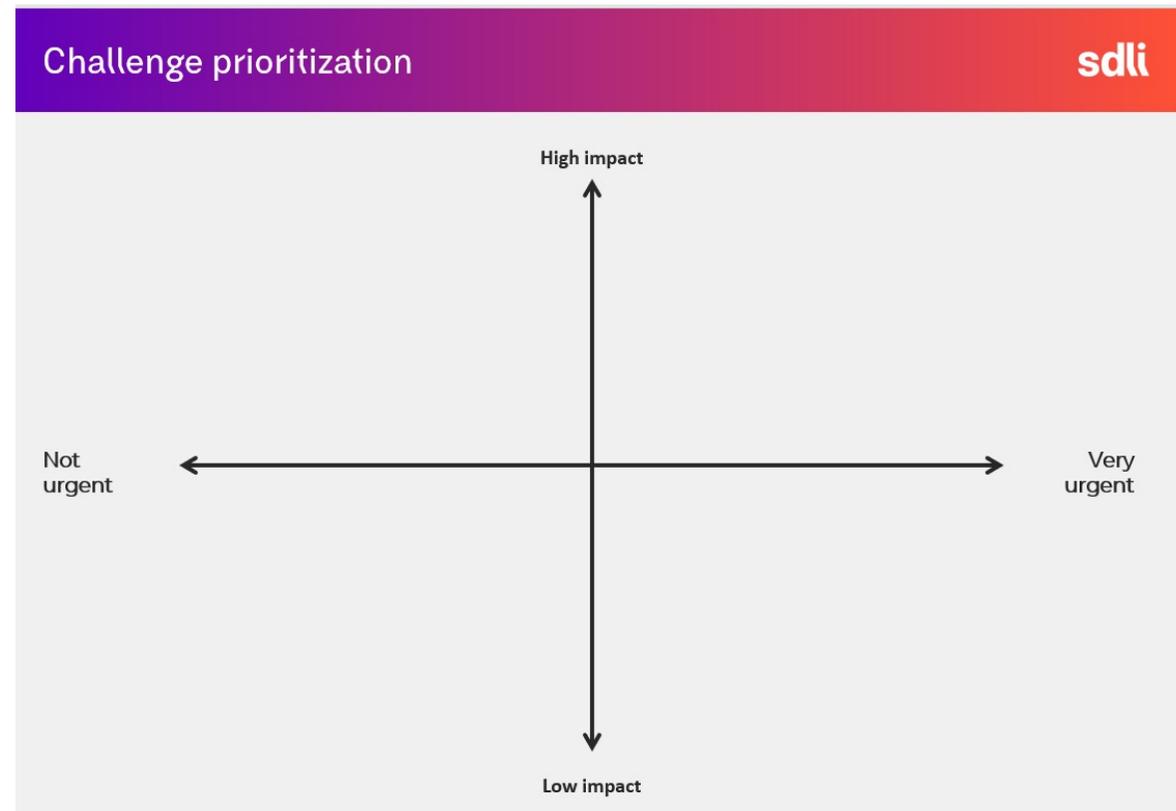
The projected impact of implementation of the solution will have for the company, as well as the benefits for the end user.

Brand positioning.

The positioning of the company at the time the challenge is launched, and again after the solution has been implemented.

Allocated resources to resolve the problem.

The company's ability to invest in resources to make potential solutions feasible and applicable.



C.

Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the company's needs:

- I. Mapping challenge services
- II. Mentoring services

Having identified the eco-innovation challenge(s), it is time to define it in a way that it is understandable for your external audience: entrepreneurs.

I. Mapping challenge services. Triple look workshops:

Having identified the eco-innovation challenge(s), it is time to define it in a way that it is understandable for your external audience: entrepreneurs.

How to identify internal innovation challenges (look inside)

Task	1 workshop with key internal stakeholders			
Methodology	Use the SCP/RAC Green Business Model Development Methodology to identify problems, needs and pains of a business model.			
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation unit / board • Executive committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional areas • Sustainability/CSR department 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business units

How to identify internal innovation challenges (look around)

Task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 workshop to analyse key stakeholders (with key internal stakeholders) • 1 workshop to identify their main pains in relation to our value proposition (with key internal stakeholders) 			
Methodology	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis of stakeholders: the “stakeholder matrix” will allow you to identify the most relevant stakeholders for your current and future business. 2. Identification of user needs: the “user persona”, “empathy map” and “customer journey map” are very useful tools to identify unmet user needs. If possible, we recommend bringing the user to the workshop. 			
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competitors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Final users 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clients

How to identify internal innovation challenges (look outside)

Task	1 future thinking workshop with key internal stakeholders				
Methodology The workshop includes:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Trend mapping 2. Trend selection 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. Creation of future scenarios 4. Identification of the current business model's challenges in relation to future scenarios 			
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation unit / board 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Executive committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business units 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functional areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability/CSR department

I. Mapping challenge services. Challenge prioritization workshop

Having identified the eco-innovation challenge(s), it is time to define it in a way that it is understandable for your external audience: entrepreneurs.

How to identify internal innovation challenges

Task	1 future thinking workshop with key internal stakeholders		
Methodology	1. Trend mapping 2. Trend selection	3. Creation of future scenarios 4. Identification of the current business model's challenges in relation to future scenarios	
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Innovation unit / board • Executive committee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business units • Functional areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustainability/CSR department

II. Mentoring services:

Type of mentoring	Description
Mentors	You could act as a connector between the company and an experienced professional in the field (e.g., an external innovation or sector-specific consultant). This person can mentor the company throughout the process of identifying their challenge(s).
Feedback sessions	You could set up a feedback session with an experienced professional in the field before identifying the potential challenges, with the aim of inspiring the key internal stakeholders involved.

Stage 02: Challenge Formulation

Establish a clear focus for the eco-innovation challenge

a) Understanding Challenge Formulation

How to formulate a challenges and your role.

b) Processes and tools

Redefining the challenge and Reviewing the challenge

c) Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the company's needs.

a.

Understanding challenge formulation

How to establish the terms of the

The aim of this stage is to ensure that the selected eco-innovation challenge is well-defined and has a clear focus. Doing this properly will help companies avoid running the risk of providing ill-defined and ineffective solutions to problems.

Your role

You will support the company in the formulation and launch of a good eco-innovation challenge.

b.

Processes and tools

Your process will follow two stages:

- I. Redefining the challenge
- II. Reviewing the challenge

I. Redefining the challenge

Given that an eco-innovation challenge is a basic starting point from which to generate a continuous flow of ideas, you will have to support the company in the formulation of a clear and understandable challenge.

Tool: HMW Formula

Challenges are formulated in a single sentence, and usually take the form of a question.

To formulate a challenge, the formula How Might We (HMW) is recommended.

A properly framed How Might We gives you the perfect frame for innovative thinking, rather than suggesting a particular solution.

This tool promotes understanding and lays the groundwork for people from outside the company to seek solutions to a specific problem.

Challenge definition sdli

How could we _____ (action) the _____ (user need),
in order to _____(desired goal and outcome)?

Description	Impact
<p>Brief explanation of the challenge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What does the title mean- Which are the goals- What is the context of the challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business impact• Benefits for the organization• Benefits for the user
Users involved (and needs)	Possible solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Users involved: description of users in terms of behaviour, user persona, motivations, and frustrations.• Unmet user needs that the solvers should address with their Solutions• User experience that the corporation wants to transform with this challenge	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Current status of the challenge• Current user experience• Desired change (ideally including kpi's)• Types of Solutions the company is thinking about

Tool: HMW Formula

The following template for challenge formulation can be used as a starting point to develop an ad-hoc version with each company. This can help to re-formulate the challenge by defining its goals, business impact, the users and needs involved, and the types of solution the company is looking for:

Examples:

- How might we design the next generation fibre cup to be recoverable on a global scale, while maintaining the performance standards we know and trust?
- How might we build a better food future for everyone, everywhere?

b.

Processes and tools

Your process will follow two stages:

- I. Redefining the challenge
- II. Reviewing the challenge

II. Reviewing the challenge

Having defined the challenge with the company, it is time to review whether the reformulation according to I. above makes sense. The redefinition can then be checked by answering the following four questions :

If the challenge respects all these points, it is also useful to re-use the HMW formula to formulate and define the most relevant challenge the company will face during the process!

01. Does it contain the three key elements of a challenge?

If you have all three elements, you have overcome the first obstacle!

01

What

The problem or opportunity we are addressing.

02

Who

The user (whether external or internal) we are solving the problem for.

03

Why

The benefit we obtain from solving the challenge.

b.

Processes and tools

Your process will follow two stages:

- I. Redefining the challenge
- II. Reviewing the challenge

02. Is it a project or a problem?

Project: A need that can be resolved with known tools and processes, or by hiring an expert. The way to achieve the solution is defined.

Problem: The need cannot be resolved using standard tools, and creative tools must therefore be applied.

If you are dealing with a project, you will not need to formulate innovation cycles. On the other hand, if you are addressing a problem, you are on the right path and move on to the next question!

03. At what level is the challenge?

If our challenge is at a very high, very general level, it needs more work: you can divide the challenge into parts and identify more concrete challenges. Working on a very generic challenge leads to vague solutions.

04. Is it understandable?

The last part of the test is to explain the challenge to someone who has not taken part in the work so far and see if they understand it. If they can do so without any problems, the challenge is clear and understandable.

C.

Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the company's needs.

At this stage you could offer two types of services:

- I. Workshop organization
- II. Mentoring service.

I. Workshop organization

Develop an internal workshop to formulate the challenge by correctly using the HMW formula:

How to formulate eco-innovation challenges

Task	1 challenge definition workshop with key internal stakeholders
Methodology	The workshop includes: 1. Explanation of the HMW Formula 2. Identification and definition of the challenge: description, impact, users involved and possible solutions 3. Guidance throughout the process.
Stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Innovation unit / board• Executive committee• Business units• Functional areas• Sustainability/CSR department

II. Mentoring Service

Type of Mentoring	Description
Mentors	Establish a session with an experienced external mentor (e.g., an innovation consultant) whose expertise offers a fresh perspective on the challenge. An external mentor will help to define the challenge in a more straightforward and understandable way, enabling it to be easily understood by the entrepreneurs charged with providing solutions.

Stage 03: Value Proposition

Outline the promised value delivered to entrepreneurs interested in participating in the challenge

a) Understanding the value proposition

Once the challenge is formulated, it is important to outline the promised value to be delivered to entrepreneurs interested in participating in the challenge.

b) Processes and tools

How to present the value proposition.

c) Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the company's needs:.

a.

Understanding the value proposition

How to present the value proposition

Once the challenge is formulated, it is important to outline the promised value to be delivered to entrepreneurs interested in participating in the challenge. This can be presented as a business or marketing statement used by the company to summarize why entrepreneurs should trust you.

Your role

You and the company will work together to tailor the value proposition to the interests of entrepreneurs.

b.

Processes and tools

The value proposition takes the form of benefits or services offered by you or the company. The intention is to attract the most talented entrepreneurs and provide them with an incentive to come up with a solution to the proposed challenge. Based on your collaboration agreement with the company, you should determine the value that you can between you provide to participating entrepreneurs.

To do this, you will meet with the company's team to define the best value proposition in proportion to the challenge launched and the resources available. In this part of the process, you will act as a mentor and guide for companies to identify, define and communicate the benefits of working with them to entrepreneurs.

How to present the value proposition

Here are some examples of what other enablers and companies offer as a value proposition:

- Expertise and experience from the company perspective
- Help the entrepreneurs to position themselves in the market (brand awareness)
- Resources to launch a pilot, develop or improve the entrepreneurs' solution
- Access to funding
- Intellectual property agreements
- Access to services (mentorship, web services and traditional entrepreneur perks)
- Become the entrepreneurs' client

Go to the "Collaboration Agreement" stage to view the proposed Incubation and Acceleration tools and services.

C.

Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the company's needs:

- I. Mentoring services
- II. Support service

I. Mentoring Services

Type of Mentoring	Description
Mentors	Establish a session with an experienced external mentor (e.g., an innovation consultant) whose expertise will help you decide which benefits or services will have the most appeal for the entrepreneurs you wish to attract.

II. Support Services

Type of Mentoring	Description
Support	Establish a session with the innovation committee or the company's management in order to determine the added value services or propositions they could offer to the entrepreneurs.

Intellectual property protection as a value proposition

This is an issue that merits its own discussion!

When it comes to new ideas, inventions, designs and prototypes, intellectual property (IP) rights such as patents are always on the table.

A successful open eco-innovation initiative should be facilitated by effective intellectual property management.

Sharing know-how, technology and expertise between collaborators is an enormous benefit that could nevertheless entail a risk of loss of assets and free riding if not managed effectively.

Accordingly, co-development activities carried out in an open eco-innovation environment require clear agreement on ownership of the solutions proposed and any IP that results, particularly where no IP has previously been registered in the relevant activity.

When creating a value proposition for your challenge, you and the company must make the rules of the game very clear: what will happen to the solution proposed once an entrepreneur agrees to participate in the call?

Carefully developed terms and conditions can help to eliminate unnecessary uncertainty by clarifying:

- How ideas are handled
- Who owns the ideas after they have been submitted

It should be emphasized that legal issues will not be discussed until there is common innovation between the large company and the entrepreneur.

Intellectual property protection as a value proposition

The following are examples of clauses included in open innovation challenge agreements whereby the entrepreneur does not transfer their intellectual property by the fact of presenting their solution to the challenge:

01. "All materials including software, source code, documentation, data, concepts and ideas (whether created or developed independently by a Participant or jointly with others) submitted to (the corporate) shall be the property of the Participants. Each Participant acknowledges and agrees that (the corporate) may use, incorporate or disclose any ideas or concepts related to the Submission now or in the future in any manner, and each Participant waives any and all claims that may arise against (the corporate) participating or otherwise attending in this Challenge for such use or disclosure".
02. "By making a Submission, each Participant acknowledges and agrees that (the corporate) may obtain many submissions in connection with this Challenge, and that such Submissions may be similar or identical in theme, idea, format or other respects to other Submitted Ideas. Unless prohibited by law, each Participant waives any and all claims against the (the corporate), that any Submission and/or other works (including videos) accepted, reviewed and/or used by (the corporate) or other Participants may be similar to his/her Submission, or any compensation that is due to such Participant in connection with such Submission or other works used by any entity in (the corporate)."
03. "Each Participant hereby grants to each entity in (the corporate) a limited non-exclusive, royalty free license ("Limited License") to access and use the Proposal Submission for the sole purpose of evaluating the Teams during the Challenge."
04. "The participants are not required to transfer exclusive intellectual property rights to the corporate. Rather, upon proceeding into the innovation challenge process, participants will be committed to work together and be consulted by the assigned (corporate) mentors to refine or develop their prototype and pitch deck that meets (the corporate) requirements and context. Participants agree to grant an irrevocable, perpetual, non-exclusive, royalty-free, worldwide license ("IPR License") to (the corporate) or any entity acting on behalf of (the corporate), effective as of the date of this document, to use, discuss, and distribute, (i) the intellectual property comprised in any and all Submissions, and all modifications and amendments thereto (collectively, the "Assigned Rights") and/or (ii) any content derived from or relating to the Assigned Rights."

Stage 04: Challenge Launch

Launch an open competition focused on a specific eco-innovation challenge

a) Understanding Challenge Launch

The main goal of this stage is to launch an open competition that focuses on a specific eco-innovation challenge, offering an incentive to entrepreneurs in a particular field to design and develop the best solution.

b) Processes and tools

Definition of the challenge rules & timetable and Communication & engagement

c) Associated services

Event planning service and Support service.

a.

Understanding challenge launch

How to launch a challenge

The main goal of this stage is to launch an open competition that focuses on a specific eco-innovation challenge, offering an incentive to entrepreneurs in a particular field to design and develop the best solution.

Your role

You will supply entrepreneurs with all the necessary information about the challenge and the process and give them the opportunity to provide solutions that meet the company's objectives.

b.

Processes and tools

Let's follow this two-stages process:

- I. Definition of the challenge rules & schedule
- II. Communication & engagement

I. Definition of challenge rules and schedule

When you launch an innovation challenge, you need to establish the basics to enable entrepreneurs to join the cause, as explained in the table below.

I. Definition of challenge rules and schedule

When you launch an innovation challenge, you need to establish the basics to enable entrepreneurs to join the cause, as explained in the table below.

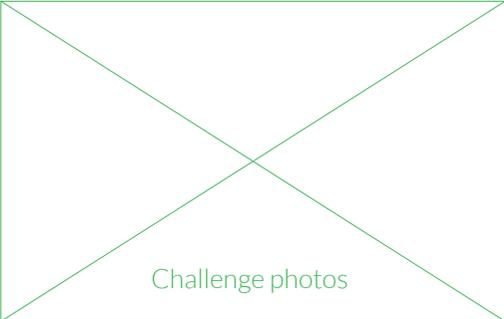
Topic	Description
Decision Criteria	Transparency is a key factor of success. You must be clear and honest about the rules of the game and how the company will make decisions on the solutions captured. Go to the “Selection” stage to see some examples of selection criteria.
Target audience	Who can participate? Your target audience is basically entrepreneurs and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early-stage entrepreneurs • Entrepreneurs in the growth stage • Scale-ups
Type of solution	You need to be clear about the type of solutions you are looking for, whether new ideas from entrepreneurs (non-developed solutions) or already developed solutions, also created by an entrepreneur. Specific documents and information might be required.
Technological readiness level (TRL)	For technological solutions, companies may wish to capture proposals with only a certain degree of technological development. Others may wish conceptual solutions to be developed.
Timetable The open innovation competition dates and highlights should be determined.	These are the main stages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kick-off: launch of the innovation competition. • Submission of solutions: submission of projects by participants. • Pre-selection process: selection of most promising projects by a selection committee. • Final selection: following the pre-selection, you might organize a pitch event or interviews with the pre-selected entrepreneurs where you and the company will select the winner. • Closure of the call and beginning of the collaboration: timeframe for the winner to improve, make tangible or develop a new solution together with the company and you.

Tool: Challenge form

Once you have all these points defined, you could make use of the following challenge form to launch a proper challenge.

Challenge title

What type of solutions are you looking for?



Challenge photos

Challenge sponsors: you should presenting who is behind the challenge to give the company visibility.

Attached files: you can upload complementary documentation here.

Reward (value proposition previously defined)

Sector: ▼

- 1) Activity
 - Communication for sustainability
 - Renewable energy and energy efficiency
 - Resource efficiency and sustainable waste management
 - Sustainable cleaning products and cosmetics
 - Sustainable construction
 - Sustainable electrical and electronic equipment
 - Sustainable food and agriculture
 - Sustainable furniture
 - Sustainable mobility
 - Sustainable textiles and clothing
 - Sustainable tourism
- 2) Topic
 - Toxic chemical-free products
 - Sound management of plastics
 - Sustainable blue economy

Deadline to submit solutions

dd/mm/yy

Challenge description
you should describe the following aspects:

Challenge goal:

Challenge background:

How to participate:

What is required?:

Who is involved?:

b.

Processes and tools

Let's follow this two-stages process:

- I. Definition of the challenge rules & schedule
- II. Communication & engagement

The tools described below will help you to attract their attention of your target audience:

II. Communication and engagement

Even if you are working with a big, well-known brand, it is not easy to capture the attention of your target community. As an enabler, your task will be to help the company attract the target audience.

To attract participants and maximize your outcomes, you will need to draw up a communication and dissemination plan for the launching of the eco-innovation challenge as well as the whole open innovation process. A well-targeted and relevant communication plan is not the easiest task.

Tool 1:

Develop a set of contents to promote the challenge

Graphic materials:

Infographics to facilitate understanding of the problem and the goals of the company; brochures, and slide decks to be used at events to promote the challenge.

Videos:

Explaining the challenge with images, company statements and interviews with key stakeholders.

Press release:

Inform the media of the launch of your challenge. You can use your brief to draft a short, impactful press release.

The tools described below will help you to attract their attention of your target audience:

Tool 2:

Use of online communication supports

Online communication is a key tool with which to reach your target audience. Below are some examples of how to use it.

Webpage for the challenge:

A landing page with a description of the challenge is always recommended as it shows your and the company's commitment to the initiative.

Open innovation platform:

You could use your own platform, or existing external platforms which might allow you to reach a greater and more specific target audience, ensuring a higher rate of success. The Switchers Eco-innovation platform is an open innovation platform with access to Mediterranean sustainable entrepreneurs.

Social networks:

Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram are your playground, and you should be very active. Think of creating a hashtag dedicated to the eco-innovation competition to spread the word and be able to follow online news regarding your challenge. You can also sponsor your social network contents.

Newsletters and emails:

Newsletters and direct emails to make sure that the message gets to the right audience as soon as possible.

Tool 3:

Networking

Create or participate in networking events:

As a speaker to promote the innovation challenge you are promoting. Choose your partner and audience wisely.

Communicate with interesting relays:

You should adapt your actions according to the target community. Universities and even co-working spaces can be part of your communication strategy.

C.

Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the company's needs:

- I. Event planning service
- II. Support service

I. Event planning service

Type of event	Description
Info Session	Live or online sessions dedicated to explaining the eco-innovation challenge and clarifying any doubts entrepreneurs might have about the selection process and the rewards. The guests you invite to the event should be entrepreneurs you think will have interesting proposals for the company we are working with.

II. Support service

Type of event	Description
Support	As an enabler you could support and guide the company on how to effectively communicate the open eco-innovation challenge. The company's involvement will be key to ensuring a high participation rate. - What types of content might attract entrepreneurs on social media? - What kind of look and feel should they have? What type of language should they use?, etc.

Stage 05: Scouting

A targeted search across the entrepreneurial ecosystem to find the solutions that best address the identified needs of the challenge

a) Understanding scouting

The goal of this stage is to conduct a targeted search across the entrepreneurial ecosystem to find the best solutions that address the identified needs of the challenge.

b) Processes and tools

During the scouting process, you should connect with different actors in your innovation ecosystem and, depending on the type of eco-innovation challenge, connect with one stakeholder or another.

c) Associated services

Company event service and Automated matching service.

A targeted search across the entrepreneurial ecosystem to find the solutions that best address the identified needs of the challenge

Stage 5: Scouting

a.

Understanding scouting

How to search the entrepreneurial

The goal of this stage is to conduct a targeted search across the entrepreneurial ecosystem to find the best solutions that address the identified needs of the challenge.

This phase is key to finding solutions to the challenge launched by the company and it is precisely here that an innovation ecosystem acquires the greatest value.

Your role

You will have to search for entrepreneurs that might have solutions to the company's challenge.

You will act as a connecting link between the company and the entrepreneurs.

b.

Processes and tools

During the scouting process, you should connect with different actors in your innovation ecosystem and, depending on the type of eco-innovation challenge, connect with one stakeholder or another. Through these connections and your own entrepreneur database you will be able to reach out to entrepreneurs with potential solutions to your company's challenge.

Tool: Entrepreneur directory

You could have your own entrepreneur directory with updated information on entrepreneurs and their respective solutions. Find out about them, learn about their most significant projects, discover the latest innovations, etc. If you make the directory public, you will give visibility to entrepreneurs among companies and create opportunities for synergies and networking between them.

A few tips:

If you are creating a directory from scratch, you will need to find entrepreneurs. The best way to find them is to reach out to your innovation ecosystem (universities, accelerators, start-up hubs, etc.), or search on other entrepreneur directories such as Crunchbase. Choose entrepreneurs you think have more value and are more aligned with your sustainability objectives and include them in your directory with all the relevant information that you would like to know about them.

Entrepreneur information:

We recommend you gather the following information:

- Legal name of the entrepreneur's initiative
- Stage of development
- Sustainability/sector
- Type of technology (if relevant)
- Entrepreneur's website
- Description of the entrepreneur
- Description of the entrepreneur's projects
- Key contact email address

A targeted search across the entrepreneurial ecosystem to find the solutions that best address the identified needs of the challenge

Stage 5: Scouting

C.

Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the company's needs:

- I. Company event service
- II. Automated matching service.

I. Company event service

Type of event	Description
Networking event	Event to establish connections between you, the company and the entrepreneurs interested in solving the eco-innovation challenge. A formal event featuring workshops, large lectures and opportunities for participants.
Custom-made introductions	Targeted one-to-one introductions between companies and entrepreneurs.
Tours and visits	Invitation to an innovation ecosystem of interest. By setting up this kind of activity, you give companies the chance to find out about potential solutions.

To attract entrepreneurs and even establish face to face connections between companies and them, you could organize and host the types of events described in the next section.

C.

Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the company's needs:

- I. Company event service
- II. Automated matching service.

II. Automated matching service

To facilitate the scouting process, you could set up an automated service that uses a tag system to match company needs to entrepreneur profiles.

This will enable you to match entrepreneur capabilities and services with company needs, generating opportunities for both company and entrepreneur.

How does it work?

Using a system of tags, both entrepreneur and company flag up their interests and, when the characteristics of the entrepreneur match what the company is looking for, the desired match is made. At this point, you can invite the entrepreneur to take part in the challenge or propose their solution to the company.

Here are some examples of tag fields that could be useful during this process:

Tag fields for entrepreneurs:

- Type of solution they have
- Sustainability sector
- Stage of development

Tag fields for companies:

- Type of solution they are looking for.
- Sustainability sector of the entrepreneur they are looking for.
- Stage of development of the solution they are looking for .

Stage 6: Selection

Select the best solution to the eco-innovation challenge

a) Understanding the selection process

The objective of this stage is to select the best solution to the company's eco-innovation challenge.

b) Processes and tools

To select the winning solution, you will have to set up selection criteria and a selection committee to appraise and score all the solutions submitted.

c) Associated services

Event planning service and Support service

a.

Understanding the selection process

How to select the best solution

The objective of this stage is to select the best solution to the company's eco-innovation challenge.

Your role

You and the company will consider the solutions submitted by various entrepreneurs and select the one that best meets the goals and objectives of the eco-innovation challenge.

b.

Processes and tools

To select the winning solution, you will have to set up selection criteria and a selection committee to appraise and score all the solutions submitted. The selection committee should consist of at least one representative of the company seeking the solution, a sustainability expert, and someone that represents you as the enabler.

Tool: Selection criteria table

The table below will help to identify and select the best solutions submitted by entrepreneurs in your open call.

Topic	Description
Alignment with objectives	Is the entrepreneur's solution aligned with the objectives/goals of the challenge? Does the solution match the company's requirements? Does the solution match the activity and issue the company wishes to address?
Technology	Are other entrepreneurs doing something similar? Most ideas are not unique: either someone has done it before, is doing it now, or has tried and failed. What needs to be implemented? Most products/services that rely on new technology invention have a higher failure rate and take longer to adopt primarily because getting people to use something new requires a lot of training. Can the core idea be patented? Patents are an important part of a company's IP protection strategy.
Sustainable impact	Is it really an innovative solution? Does it deliver new services to local and regional communities, introduce a new product into the market, or develop a new, effective and financially sustainable way of delivering environmental and social benefits? Will implementation of the innovative solution have a positive environmental impact? Does it look financially viable in the long term? Will use of the product/service involve disruptive changes in terms of consumer behaviour and promotion of sustainable living? Is its rationale convincing?

C.

Associated services

- I. Event planning service
- II. Support service

I. Event planning service

Type of event	Description
Pitch event	<p>Short, time-restricted events to quickly and efficiently feature a variety of entrepreneurs.</p> <p>The community convenes to review progress on the entrepreneurs' products and services.</p> <p>One of the key elements of this type of event is the presence of judges, who can be external (experts on a topic) or internal (company innovation committee, CSR department, etc.). Their role will be to evaluate the each entrepreneur's pitch and make a decision according to previously defined criteria.</p>

II. Support service

Type of support	Description
Evaluation of applications	<p>Support the company by helping to evaluate the applications received from entrepreneurs.</p> <p>Set a date to do this and use the Selection criteria table above to help you decide which solutions will benefit the company the most.</p>

Stage 7: Collaboration agreement

Establishing the terms of the collaboration between the company, the entrepreneur and you

a) Understanding the collaboration agreement

How to establish the terms of the agreement and your role in the process.

b) Processes and tools

The collaboration agreement is linked to the value proposition that you and the company defined prior to launching the challenge.

c) Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the type of solution sought: Incubation and Acceleration.

a.

Understanding the collaboration agreement

Understanding the collaboration

This phase consists of establishing the responsibilities of and benefits for all the parties involved, i.e., drawing up the terms of the collaboration between the company, the entrepreneur and you.

Your role

Your goal in this stage is to act as a facilitator and guide throughout the process of defining the collaboration agreement.

b.

Processes and tools

The collaboration agreement is linked to the value proposition that you and the company defined prior to launching the challenge. The agreement will vary depending on the type of solution preferred by the company:

- A new idea/solution/business model innovation, or
- An already developed solution.

The table below indicates some of the main features that should be included in this agreement.

Topic	Features	Description
Roles and responsibilities	Terms of reference	<p>Refers to the general terms governing the collaboration between the entrepreneur, the company, and you, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining the objective and duration of the collaboration • Who will participate on behalf of the entrepreneur, whether the company or you • Establishing the workload or quantity of time • Defining the expected outcomes or deliverables <p>With respect to the entrepreneur, depending on the collaboration, they might agree to the following responsibilities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidentiality agreement • To develop a functional mvp • To create a solution • To grow with the company's contacts
Development of the solution	Prototyping Product development	<p>Will you or the company help with the process of prototyping and testing the product, process or business model?</p> <p>Will the company determine all the characteristics of the product provided by the entrepreneur to create the solution?</p>
Resources	Know-how Supporting tools Office space	<p>Will you or the company provide the entrepreneur with technical know-how?</p> <p>Will you or the company provide the entrepreneur with access to technology, materials, software, or other tools?</p> <p>Will you or the company provide a physical space such as an office where the entrepreneur can work? Which one?</p>
Business development	Business planning Marketing and communication Legal inquiries	<p>Will you or the company support the entrepreneur in the process of defining a business plan to organize its activity? How?</p> <p>Will you or the company provide the entrepreneur with the resources to make themselves more visible in the market? How?</p> <p>Will you or the company advise the entrepreneur on how to set themselves up as a company? How?</p>
Financial support	Award Finding investors	<p>Will you or the company provide a monetary award or a voucher for the entrepreneur to obtain external technical support?</p> <p>Will you or the company help the entrepreneur by attracting external actors to provide financing to the project? How?</p>

C.

Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the type of solution sought.

- I. Incubation: of a new idea/solution/business model innovation
- II. Acceleration: of the introduction to the market of an already developed solution.

I. Incubation

Incubation services provide mentoring and value-added services to help entrepreneurs build viable, market-ready solutions.

Usually focused on the initial phase, these services convert entrepreneurs' ideas into real business models. Companies get a cost-effective and outsourced research and development function, while entrepreneurs get access to facilities, expertise and technical support. During the incubation period, these services reduce financial and managerial burdens to enable entrepreneurs to focus on service/product development. Incubation programmes vary in length, but great results can be achieved in as little as three months, or as much as two years.

Although every programme is different, most incubator programmes offer the following:

- A comprehensive business training programme
- Mentoring from the company or external experts
- Networking events
- Awards or subsidies

C.

Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the type of solution sought.

I. Incubation: of a new idea/solution/business model innovation

II. Acceleration: of the introduction to the market of an already developed solution.

II. Acceleration

If the chosen entrepreneur has an established business or solution, it is time to take it a stage further and support them in accelerating the introduction of their solution into the market.

An accelerator programme can last anywhere from two to six months. The dual objective is for companies to meet the challenge they have been facing, and for entrepreneurs to emerge ready to run on their own, with positioning sufficient to claim a share of their target markets.

Business accelerators fall into two main types:

- Seed programmes focus on less mature solutions. The solution is adapted to the needs of the company and tested to see if it works before identifying a suitable business model.
- Second-stage programmes focus on more mature solutions that have already moved beyond start-up. Here the solution is applied directly inside the company and validated.

C.

Associated services

Select the most relevant associated services according to the type of solution sought.

- I. Incubation: of a new idea/solution/business model innovation
- II. Acceleration: of the introduction to the market of an already developed solution.

II. Acceleration

During acceleration, you will use the following to provide intensive short- or medium-term support to cohorts of rapid-growth entrepreneurs:

- Mentoring from external experts
- Training
- Physical working space
- Company-specific resources: can include money invested in a startup, normally in exchange for a variable share of equity.

Feature	Incubation	Acceleration
Solution stage	New idea/solution/business model innovation	Already developed solution
Purpose	Focus more on service/product development	Support the entrepreneur to accelerate introduction of the solution into the market
Support	Office space, administrative and legal support, business planning, prototyping, and product development	Seed funding, mentorship from industry experts and networking

a.

Understanding investment

How to attract investment

This phase consists of finding investment for the project or solution the entrepreneur is working on.

Your role

Your value as enabler lies in supporting entrepreneur and company as much as you can in their quest to attract investors.

b.

Processes and tools

Finance plays a critical role in innovation as it allows organizations to accelerate research and adopt technologies necessary for creation, as well as develop and commercialize innovations and find solutions to challenges. Accessing external traditional or alternative finance as well as internal company finance for scaling up the eco-solutions is an important challenge for both entrepreneur and company.

1. Mapping the external investment ecosystem

Entrepreneurs can fund open innovation solutions using a variety of funding instruments provided by different external financial actors, intermediaries and investors. External sources of financing include traditional instruments such as debt, alternative investment instruments such as equity, and a number of hybrid forms, provided by individual investors such as business angels, venture capital funds, banks and capital markets, among others.



The **Finance Toolkit** provided by the **SwitchersFund** is an example of a tool to map external finance opportunities, whether traditional or non-traditional. The Finance Toolkit provides access to a comprehensive traditional and non-traditional investor database and matches the financial requirement to the opportunities according to the developmental stage of the entrepreneur's business.

b.

Processes and tools

Finance plays a critical role in innovation as it allows organizations to accelerate research and adopt technologies necessary for creation, as well as develop and commercialize innovations and find solutions to challenges. Accessing external traditional or alternative finance as well as internal company finance for scaling up the eco-solutions is an important challenge for both entrepreneur and company.

2. Corporate investment

Generally the company, as promotor of the open challenge, will eventually become the first investor in the solutions identified. In this case, the corporate investor is essentially buying a piece of the project with its investment by putting down capital in exchange for equity: a portion of ownership in the entrepreneur and company project and rights to its potential future profits.

- **In this way, investors form a partnership with the entrepreneur and the company they choose to invest in.**

3. Finding and funding the correct innovation to invest in

The process of choosing entrepreneurs in open innovation is proving increasingly difficult in the face of the proliferation of emerging companies worldwide. Traditionally, investors and companies carry out a scouting process to enlarge and vary their portfolios.



Switchers.org offers a scouting and matching tool that gives investors and companies access to an entrepreneur database they can use to search for the best solution to invest in. The tool filters by country, sector, investment needs and level of business development. Another matching tool is available at **[BBVA market place](#)**.

C.

Associated services

An enabler could offer the following services in the investment phase:

- I. Surveillance and scouting
- II. Capacity Building
- III. Match making events
- IV. Crowdfunding campaigns

I. Surveillance and scouting

Type of support	Description
Surveillance and scouting	The process of financing the innovation may also include a public funding phase. The combination of public and private funds, crucial to accelerating the adoption of innovative solutions, represents a good opportunity for enterprises and varies according to the extent of the funds available for this purpose. Monitoring the flow of funds (you can find an example of information you should check here) and reporting on available opportunities is a key role for the enabler.
Publicity and communication	The surveillance and scouting service can be offered on a monthly basis and reach all stakeholders with a bi-weekly or monthly direct communication (e.g., newsletters).

C.

Associated services

An enabler could offer the following services in the investment phase:

- I. Surveillance and scouting
- II. Capacity Building
- III. Match making events
- IV. Crowdfunding campaigns

I. Surveillance and scouting

Type of support	Description
Capacity building	Entrepreneurs will be selected to take part in an intensive capacity building programme with the objective of preparing them to pitch their solutions to a pool of selected investors.
Workshop	The capacity building programme should consist of at least 3 days of common workshop plus 1 personalized day to support the entrepreneurs as they prepare to meet investors. The entrepreneur will learn how to present the idea, the team and the solution to an investors jury.
Pitch deck	A pitch deck (you can find an example here) is a brief presentation to provide the audience with a quick overview of the business plan. The entrepreneur will use the pitch deck during face-to-face or online meetings with potential investors, customers, partners and co-founders.
Portfolio presentation	A portfolio of the selected company should be developed with the executive profiles of the businesses to be shared with investors.

C.

Associated services

An enabler could offer the following services in the investment phase:

- I. Surveillance and scouting
- II. Capacity Building
- III. Match making events
- IV. Crowdfunding campaigns

III. Matching events

Type of support	Description
Networking events	Meeting to establish new relationships between investors, companies and entrepreneurs. An event featuring workshops, talks and a place for people to network and learn about opportunities in their sector.
Custom-made introductions	Investors will receive the company's portfolio before the meeting to preview the proposed solutions and the associated business models requiring finance.
Pitch day	A jury composed of selected investors will attend the pitch day to evaluate, provide and ask for further input on the business models. The day provides a chance entrepreneurs and companies to present their solutions and seek investments or commercial partnerships.

C.

Associated services

An enabler could offer the following services in the investment phase:

- I. Surveillance and scouting
- II. Capacity Building
- III. Match making events
- IV. Crowdfunding campaigns

III. Crowdfunding

Type of support	Description
Guide	Crowdfunding is a way for small businesses or start-ups to raise money in exchange for equity, rewards, debt, or nothing at all. The switchmed programme has developed a useful guide to implementing a crowdfunding campaign, aimed at eco-entrepreneurs and ecological and social initiatives in the southern mediterranean.
Crowdfunding campaign	While preparing for the campaign, the entrepreneurs will learn how to mobilize their community, conduct a campaign and create loyalty in a community.

Challenge met!



Throughout this process you have been able to appreciate the importance of your role in making an open eco-innovation initiative a success.

Thanks to your eco-innovation ecosystem, expertise and support you have facilitated access to innovation solutions by companies and public entities and supported the development of these solutions.

You have played the role of connector between entrepreneurs and companies by:

- **Helping companies to find solutions aligned to the objectives of their eco-innovation challenges.**
- **Supporting entrepreneurs in developing their solutions and finding clients.**
- **Creating new partnerships between companies and entrepreneurs.**

As an open eco-innovation enabler you will foster a culture of open innovation focused on a sustainable future. You will also help to expand the open eco-innovation concept, along with its practices and working methods, as it gathers increasing momentum worldwide.

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