



## **THE INNOVATION LAB**

*In association with Change Agency and Luminous Energy*

### **CONCEPT NOTE**

#### **Background**

A number of innovation researchers have identified “liquid networks” as being essential to enable innovation to flourish<sup>1</sup>. Organic Cotton supply chains are an excellent example of a liquid network, where participants know each other, are confident in the context they are working in, and have a purpose-driven approach. As a result they feel more able to take the risk of innovating than they would do alone, outside the network.

At this year’s Organic Cotton Round Table in Mumbai, India, Change Agency will host the Innovation Lab – a celebration of new ideas in organic cotton, competing for the OCRT Innovation Award 2015.

#### **How does it work?**

Echoing the “Dragon’s Den” TV program which shows in many countries, eight innovators – shortlisted from applications received by email – will present their idea at the OCRT in Mumbai (either in person or via video link) to a panel of judges. There are no strict rules for entry but ideally pitches would broadly fit into the themes prioritized by the Organic Cotton Round Table Task Forces: Seed & Soils, Business Models and Consumer Engagement.

#### **How to apply?**

In order to apply, applicants must send a one-page overview of their project/idea to Lisa Emberson ([Lisa@TextileExchange.org](mailto:Lisa@TextileExchange.org)) by 14<sup>th</sup> August. Shortlisted applicants will be notified by 28<sup>th</sup> August.

#### **What will happen on the day?**

As each session of the OCRT concludes and the next gets ready to begin, the Innovation Lab fires up with two pitches to the panel of judges, who will be in the audience. Innovators – who may be individual or in teams – get just 3 minutes to pitch their idea. They can have just one powerpoint slide to support them, but can use any other artifact they wish to enliven their presentation. Change Agency will operate a strict timing check to make it fair for all. During the OCRT this will give us 4 pitches, each one heightening expectations for the main session.

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<sup>1</sup> For example Steven Johnson, *Where Good Ideas Come From*, 2010



## **The Innovation Lab session**

At the end of the OCRT, a 90 minute session will bring the Innovation Lab to its climax. During the day, 2 pairs of Innovators will have presented their ideas. Their names and a brief description of their idea will be displayed on screens in the room.

After a brief introduction to the principles of Innovation by Change Agency, 4 more Innovators will make 3 minute pitches to the panel of judges, who by now have come out of the audience and are seated on the stage. Once again, strict timing will be enforced, and creative presentation techniques will be encouraged.

At this point, we will have heard from 8 innovators. They will each be asked to join one of the tables in the room to discuss their innovation in more detail with the audience members seated there, for around 20 minutes. This will increase audience understanding of the innovation and the process which led to it, and contribute new ideas and contacts to the innovators.

After the discussion period, the chair of the judges will speak about the judges' thoughts on the innovations they have heard. A quick round of audience reactions will be taken on radio microphones around the room.

Then the results are announced: the two runners up (3<sup>rd</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> place) are announced and then the winner of the OCRT Innovation Award is revealed and brought up on stage to receive their award.

The Award will be a development of the Future Shapers Awards given out at the TE Conference in Hong Kong, featuring organic cotton bolls in a glass enclosure, engraved with the award title.

There will be a cash prize for the winner (the size of which will depend on the success of sponsorship negotiations) to be spent on taking their idea to the next stage. The TE Communications team will publicize the winning idea, bringing valuable public profile to the innovator. As the competition runs each year, we will revisit past winners to find out how their idea has progressed since they won, and all of the innovators who pitch their ideas will be placed on a group email list for peer-to-peer support and advice.

## **Conclusion**

Organic value chains are hotbeds of new ideas and innovation. The Innovation Lab will showcase these ideas and reward the best of them. As a day-long event leading to an afternoon climax, it presents an excellent sponsorship opportunity for a company which wishes to emphasize its credentials as an innovator.