sparkLab

Will lead the evolution of telecentres, from public access points to a global network of innovation hubs for socio-economic development.

http://www.telecentre.org/sparklab

Spark*Lab* is an initiative created and coordinated by Telecentre.org Foundation, the Government of Catalonia, and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in close collaboration with a select group of organizations and professionals from the public and private worlds of academia. It has that has the following goals:

- To create a global network of centers specializing in innovation, digital inclusion, and high impact socioeconomic community undertakings;
- To coordinate an international cooperation platform that facilitates participation and and international cooperation from different community, academic, public and private organizations;
- To stimulate innovation among individuals and community organizations;
- To develop ICT solutions of high added social and technological value for communities, businesses, and public and private entities;
- To build up social talent, projects, and businesses;
- To promote the establishment of multi-service civic spaces for collaborative work, discussion, learning, and better use of ICT;
- To advance and expand products and services at a regional and global level;
- Facilitate access to technological exchanges, culture, and multi-sectoral knowledge at a national, regional, and global level;
- Facilitate the experimentation and piloting of concepts, applications, ICT services and solutions at a national, regional, and global level;
- To create ICT trends for development.

FOUNDERS

The International Telecommunication Union is the United Nations agency specializing in information and communication technologies. The ITU is committed to connecting every person in the world, regardless of where they live. The work of the ITU ensures the right of all people to communicate. It also offers a global platform for the discussion and exchange between different stakeholders in the world of ICT, facilitating the collaboration and development of initiatives between diverse sectors, experts, and professionals worldwide.

The Government of Catalonia (*Generalitat de Catalunya*) is a government organization that has consistently showed its desire to take advantage of ICT and the latest technological tendencies to create equitable and modern conditions for the development for all citizens. The Generalitat and its partner agencies in the city of Barcelona have an internationally recognized leadership in developing models, investigating, and generating knowledge and advanced uses for ICT, as well as being a territory and city where, every year, major events on the development and promotion of technology bring together the most elite representatives and leaders of the trade worldwide.

The Telecentre.org Foundation (TCF) is a global organization focused on the promotion and development of the different models of centres for public access to the Internet, or telecentres. TCF's main goal is to create the best possible environment to unlock people's individual potential, through intelligent and appropriate use of the different options offered by ICT on a global level. TCF is committed to improving people's living conditions and building more intelligent communities thanks to the addition and inclusive use of ICT.

CONCEPT & ACTIVITIES

The **Spark*Lab*** concept is the evolution of the traditional model of an ICT public space or telecentre, transformed into a laboratory of civic innovation and social inclusion that facilitates multi-sector participation and a more advanced and efficient use of ICT and mobile communication resources. It is the telecentre of the future, where the community collaborates, learns, experiments, and brings about innovation, ventures, services, contents and solutions in a dynamic, participatory, and expandable way.

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CHANGING THE RULES - BRINGING INNOVATION - DIGITAL INCLUSION - ENTREPRENEURSHIP

A **Spark*Lab*** is an urban development center that makes use of the capabilities of local experts and professionals, bringing them together with contents and global resources to make the best possible use of the ICT and mobile communication technologies to improve and build new options of socioeconomic development for the population.

Spark*Lab* is an international brand that uses elements of the franchise model to ensure components in its operation, and management tools, and achieve global impact. It is coordinated centrally by a Secretary of Operations based in Barcelona, Spain, and whose primary responsibilities are:

- Managing the process to apply to have access to the rights to duplicate the SparkLab model and concept in multiple countries, cities, and contexts;
- Monitoring the unconditional following of the standards and procedures included in the model;
- Providing guides for the use and planning of activities under the Spark*Lab* brand;
- Coordinating, executing, and certifying the inception of local Spark*Lab* facilitators;
- Coordinating centralized advertising of the concept worldwide through online platforms;
- Managing an international and local regulatory framework that facilitates the participation of various stakeholders;
- Managing and facilitating access to investment resources for the implementation of activities and projects on a local, regional, or global level;
- Regularly certifying unconditional compliance with the Spark*Lab* model.

In this context:
- All community institutions, public or private, individually or as a group, can apply to obtain the rights to use the Spark*Lab* brand, thus gaining access to the resources, benefits, and opportunities that the initiative and its partners offer worldwide.
- Conditions, rules, timeframes, and formats to apply to develop a Spark*Lab* will be available starting October 31, 2013 at http:www.telecentre.org/sparklab

WE ARE HERE TO SPARK CREATIVITY - TALENTS - COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT

Activities of a Spark*Lab*
- SparkTalks: a bi-monthly series of presentations by innovators and leaders of the ICT sector about technological advancements, products, services, projects, demonstrations and other ICT initiatives for development
- Exploration and participatory experimentation on the uses and alternative applications of ICT in different contexts and ecosystems
- Demonstration and piloting of new technologies, software, applications, and platforms for content exchange
- Demonstration and testing of new methods for teaching and training
- Constant development of basic and advanced ICT classes on various topics and areas of human development through the Telecentre Academy and global partner courses
- Incubation of ICT talent and ventures
- Development of new ICT solutions and applications
- Provision of specialized services for digital inclusion and ICT for development

Centers for public access to the Internet, or telecentres, offer the main way to access ICT resources as well as other technologies for more than 1 billion people the world. Despite the wide penetration of mobile telephony, its low cost and variety, 3 out of 7 people on the planet choose daily to obtain access to information, entertainment, and learn at one of the over 600,000 public access points or telecentres that operate worldwide today.

GLOBAL MULTI-STAKEHOLDER PLATFORM - SHARING RESOURCES - KNOWLEDGE & SERVICES

Telecentre.org Foundation (TCF) is the axis of a diverse global network of organizations and systems specialized in the use of telecentres and ICT. The desire to offer IT literacy and create more and better opportunities for all people to better use ICT and unite hundreds of thousands of public and private organizations allows the active exchange of knowledge and regular collaboration at national, regional, and global levels between professionals and organizations that seek to expand the impact of ICT products and services worldwide. The coordinated collective work of the global telecentre community has allowed for the creation of a wide range of new services and applications of ICT in the areas of education, governance, health, promotion of small businesses, and individual, community, business, social and economic innovation, especially in rural areas or among other special needs sectors.

The global network of telecentres and other types of centers for public internet access provides a wide variety of services and create multiple opportunities for more than 1 billion people on a daily basis.

The main role of TCF is to create the conditions and strategic alliances that are needed to promote specialized models and services developed by Spark*Lab* members and allies, as well as obtain and share technical and financial resources, platforms and channels that allow these services to reach the highest possible number of people worldwide.

Telecentre model evolution and trends in the ICT sector

The developments taking place globally in ICT are becoming faster and more dynamic, causing the promotion and adoption processes for these products and services at the community and civic levels to be constantly revised and improved. Because TCF is aware of this reality, we are constantly working to find and create models, events, and more efficient platforms that make it possible for new technological advances to be adopted by our global telecentre community, thus reaching all sectors of the population.

TCF firmly believes that current ICT use and experimentation by individuals is creating a new global phenomenon of innovation and ventures that develops solutions and services better suited to people's needs.

This situation includes proposals to improve different technological devices, as well as modify or diversify their practical applications. Since this is a new phenomenon worldwide, there aren't enough platforms yet that can capture and incubate these experiences with innovation in a systematic way, or with additional resources that allow the expansion and spreading of these practices to other contexts and regions worldwide.

The private sector has concentrated its investments on innovation in a context and platforms that give priority to the development of new ICT solutions and services for the more affluent sectors of industry and the population. This situation, however, has not prevented the rise of innovation from the most diverse groups of citizens; so that high added value innovation and creation of services come out of every human group where creative uses of ICT takes place consistently and with great diversity. The challenge for projects and social organizations is to be able to develop solutions and services that have true potential for expansion and that benefit a wide number of people globally, thus capturing the interest and private funding needed to spread innovation methodologies and ICT that guarantee a high, sustainable impact to the widest number of people.

The need to ensure high impact and to desire to benefit a large number of people have compelled the networks of telecentres to improve their functioning and collective work. This exercise has elevated its importance as a network and as a strategic partner in the implementation of research or projects of high socioeconomic impact, thus becoming an effective channel for the distribution of new ideas, products and services that stimulate personal and communal development.

This constant process of evolution and adaptation of the networks of telecentres to identify the best way to add value to people's daily lives through ICT has accelerated the process of transformation for organizations of telecentres globally. The new emerging models further strengthen the value of the network and the exchange of experiences, resources, and knowledge between social, business, and government organizations linked to telecentres, allowing for the establishment of more innovative telecentres worldwide. These new models offer more and better conditions for new alliances and projects with the private sector, social investors, and the academe; as well as proactively integrate all the benefits currently offered by mobile telephony devices and tablets. Today, telecentres contribute to large-scale research processes, and the expansion of products and services that reach a much more meaningful number of individuals.

All over the world, telecentres play a key role in educating and training thousands of millions of people, especially in peri-urban and rural areas and among human groups with special needs. This role of facilitating access to training and education has transformed many telecentre networks into centers that are highly specialized in the transfer of ICT contents for diverse contexts and needs, particularly at rural and community levels, which has allowed them to position themselves as a very effective training channel among content providers, and public and private academic and technical institutions. The high number of existing telecentres around the world offer an ideal platform to find and prepare employees, entrepreneurs, and future innovators. On the other hand, the financial crisis that currently affects several countries has also influenced the accelerated development of new telecentre models. These new models, more centered on innovation and entrepreneurship, are betting on better integration of financial, technological, and content resources all of which provide better opportunities for development, and at the same time strengthen individual and collective skills within the community. This new approach to the process of appropriation of ICT provides the private sector with access to the largest global laboratory of innovative citizens and organizations that are highly specialized in training people with ICT resources, all of them willing to promote the solutions and products required to face the development challenges of the 21st century.

Models like: **Living-Labs, City-Labs** in Europe, or **Tech Hub** in Asia and Africa are concrete proof of this fast process of transformation where the incubation of talents and entrepreneurship and the integration of mobile technologies and continuous innovation are the mainstay of the management of the new telecentre models, thereby achieving higher efficiency levels in the adoption of products and services that stimulate community development.
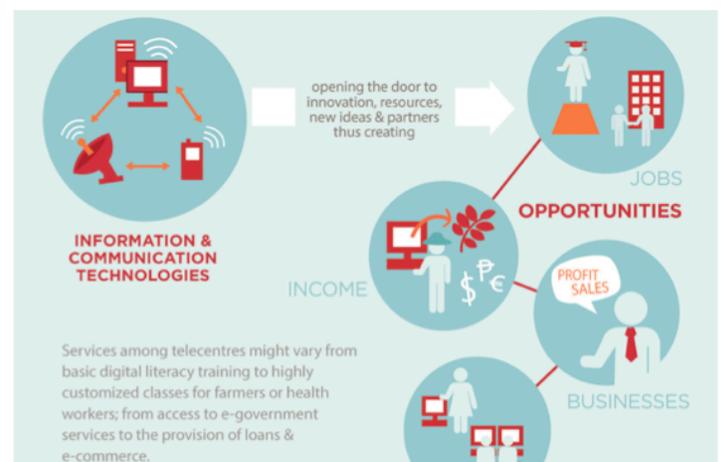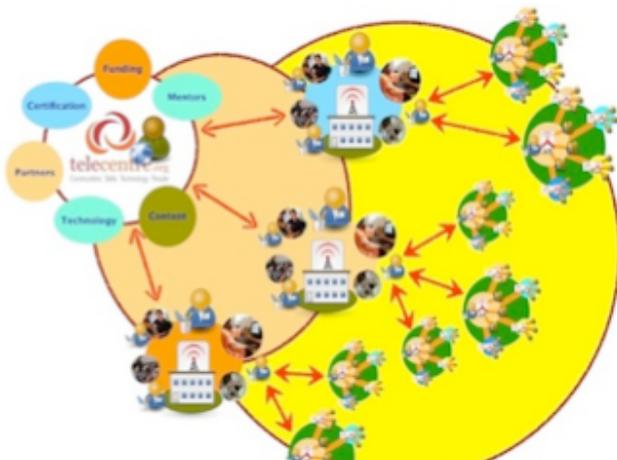
DIGITAL INCLUSION - COMMUNITIES - SKILLS
PEOPLE - MOBILE TECHNOLOGIES - INNOVATION
SOCIAL ENTERPRISE - TELECENTER 2.0 - IDEAS
ENTREPRENEURSHIP - DEVELOPMENT - IMPACTS

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The fast introduction of the different devices and mobile telephony that now extends worldwide gave rise to the idea that the role of telecentres would decrease considerably or that they would completely disappear. This, however, has not happened and there is no clear evidence that the number of public access centers to the Internet or telecentres has gone down. On the contrary, there are various projects and organizations interested in creating or developing new telecentre networks in many countries, and there will be more than one and a half million telecentres worldwide by the year 2018, many of which will have already integrated various models of cooperation with platforms and mobile devices.

At the same time, there are clear signs that the mobile industry is interested in collaborating and exploring joint ventures with telecentre networks worldwide to expand and diversify markets and services developed for the mobile industry. More than ever, telecentres and mobile telephony offer an opportunity for budding economies and markets, expanding the reach of their services, collecting data, and developing new applications with higher socio-economic impact, among many other possibilities.

The global tendency of technological development points to total connectivity and accessibility. In this context, it is important to highlight the concept of "Internet of Things,", where the intelligent (smart) development of solutions is essential in order to guarantee efficient accessibility to content, information, services, and solutions. At the same time, planning Smart Cities goes hand in hand with the training of a new kind of citizens and users of ICT, the "Smart Citizen." Because of their close understanding of the needs of people and their vast experience in the efficient adoption of solutions and models of ICT development, telecentres have much to contribute to the training, promotion, and expansion of these concepts.

This proposal also considers relevant the rapid expansion of the new collaborative models of the incubation of talents, businesses, and projects (Hubs or Labs) in addition to the larger trend of people and organizations working together in open, shared spaces (co-working), both models aimed at making better use of the resources and knowledge provided by ICT today.

Finally, the success achieved with the **Spark** concept and brand at the 4th Global Forum on Telecentres, as an abstract concept that unifies and represents the diversity of telecentre models that exist worldwide, offers a naming alternative that is not at odds with the terminology or local identity used by the members of its global community, and is a valid option to portray the values and objectives that the Global Laboratory seeks to promote and implement worldwide.

All the elements previously described are the founding aspects that TCF and its strategic partners have considered to generate a new concept for a global lab and telecentre of the future, more in tune with the needs and tendencies of the global community, and that will, in turn, allow us to better highlight and transfer successful practices, products, and services, creating a platform for strategic association at the highest level that is open to all social, financial, and political stakeholders that are interested in the creation and development of opportunities with ICT.