Immediate Release

The GovLab launches collective intelligence to solve public problems

https://www.thegovlab.org/collective-intelligence.html

BROOKLYN, New York, Tuesday, October 20, 2020 – A new report from The Governance Lab (The GovLab) at NYU's Tandon School of Engineering launched today at an event at the Nesta Centre for Collective Intelligence, has found organizations that tap the wisdom of the crowd are better at solving many of the problems that trouble governments, including those exacerbated by COVID-19 — from air pollution and chronic illness, to sustainable development, climate change and disaster response.

The report, entitled *Using Collective Intelligence to Solve Public Problems*, examined global examples of how public institutions are using new technology to take advantage of the collective action and collective wisdom of people in their communities and around the world to address problems like climate change, loneliness and natural disaster response. The GovLab has also published 30 case studies to show how leaders have designed the most successful projects. These include Lakewood, Colorado, whose Sustainable Neighborhoods Program has engaged more than 20,000 residents in running 500 sustainability events and projects. SynAthina from Athens, Greece is a platform where 443 civic groups have posted 4,050 activities, enabling residents to collectively revitalize their city. Founded in Kenya in 2007 as an election monitoring tool, Ushahidi (Swahili for "Testimony") has been used for 150,000 "crowdmapping" projects to rescue victims from the Haitian earthquake in 2010, prevent forest fires in Italy and Russia, and crowdsource incidents of sexual harassment in Egypt, among other campaigns in 160 countries.

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The report is part of a broader "Collective Intelligence to Solve Public Problems" project that includes the 30 original case studies, an online course, a podcast, report and design guide all aimed at helping leaders respond to problems more efficiently and inclusively.

In addition to the case studies, The GovLab partnered with over a dozen global institutions, including UNDP, the MIT Media Lab and Nesta, to launch "Collective Crisis Intelligence," a free online course designed to help institutions improve disaster response through the use of volunteer participation.

"As novel challenges continue to present themselves around the world, it is becoming increasingly apparent that traditional ways of solving problems are outdated and ineffective," said Beth Simone Noveck, director of The GovLab. "Through this research, we have observed that institutions which choose to work more openly and collaboratively with local organizations and citizens are better able to respond to public problems, including emergencies and crises such as the challenges brought on by COVID-19."

The accompanying practical guide *Collective Intelligence: A Checklist for the Public Sector* lays out nine questions which serve as a checklist for those who aim to design a collective intelligence initiative. The questions focus thinking on how to tap the capabilities of the crowd that are relevant for solving the problem at hand and help to ensure public engagement is meaningful and impactful.

Matt Ryan, Senior Fellow at The GovLab and report co-author, said: "The speed, scale and complexity of public problems, combined with the trust crisis confronted by many public institutions, make using the skills and knowledge of 'the crowd' much more than a 'nice-to-have'. For serious public policy makers and service providers it's a necessity."

For more information, please visit https://www.thegovlab.org/collective-intelligence.html or contact comms@thegovlab.org.

About The Governance Lab
The Governance Lab's mission is to improve people's lives by changing the way we govern. Our goal at The GovLab is to strengthen the ability of institutions — including but not limited to governments — and people to work more openly, collaboratively, effectively, and legitimately to make better decisions and solve public problems. We believe that increased availability and use of data, new ways to leverage the capacity, intelligence, and expertise of people in the problem-solving process, combined with new advances in technology and science, can transform governance. We approach each challenge and opportunity in an interdisciplinary, collaborative way, irrespective of the problem, sector, geography, and level of government. For more information, visit thegovlab.org.

About the New York University Tandon School of Engineering
The NYU Tandon School of Engineering dates to 1854, the founding date for both the New York University School of Civil Engineering and Architecture and the Brooklyn Collegiate and Polytechnic Institute. A January 2014 merger created a comprehensive school of education and research in engineering and applied sciences as part of a global university, with close connections to engineering programs at NYU Abu Dhabi and NYU Shanghai. NYU Tandon is rooted in a vibrant tradition of entrepreneurship, intellectual curiosity, and innovative solutions to humanity's most pressing global challenges. Research at Tandon focuses on vital intersections between communications/IT,

cybersecurity, and data science/AI/robotics systems and tools and critical areas of society that they influence, including emerging media, health, sustainability, and urban living. We believe diversity is integral to excellence, and are creating a vibrant, inclusive, and equitable environment for all of our students, faculty and staff. For more information, visit engineering.nyu.edu.

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