

Throughout the year, ARENA's in-house innovation program, A-Lab, continued to play a key role in generating new ideas, new business models and new collaboration partnerships. A-Lab is an innovation laboratory that uses

design thinking methodologies to identify ideas to solve energy system problems. It is designed to create cross-sector partnerships and world-first projects to transform Australia towards a clean energy future.

CREATING SYSTEMIC CHANGE THROUGH PEOPLE



Since its creation, A-Lab has brought together more than 400 participants from all areas of the energy system. A-Lab sessions are based on the Dyer, Gregerson and Christensen innovator's DNA model with participants encouraged to challenge the status quo, take risks, apply patterns of questioning, observing, networking and experimenting, and use cognitive associational thinking. Participants consistently rate A-Lab sessions highly.

ARENA has now worked with a number of other organisations to draw the A-Lab approach into their own operations.

The Australian Energy Market Operator (AEMO) has been a strong supporter of A-Lab since its inception. It currently has the highest representation of any organisation with 21 AEMO representatives participating in one or more A-Lab sessions. AEMO used the 'A-Lab approach' to help develop its renewable energy zones workshop. It wanted to create an efficient and interactive forum where a diverse group could form a collective understanding of what they were trying to achieve, while also working through the opportunities and barriers.

Using an A-Lab style of thinking successfully enabled AEMO and the Australian Energy Market Commission to receive bulk feedback from network service providers, generation developers, consumers and industry bodies, accelerating stakeholder engagement and delivering the respective projects within short timeframes.

Energy Networks Australia (ENA) approached the A-Lab team in July 2017 to see if the approach could help accelerate action in response to its Energy Network Transformation Roadmap. Working in close partnership with the A-Lab team, ideate and incubate sessions were run in September and October 2017, which aimed to generate new project ideas that supported grid orchestration of renewables. Both events were over capacity with 72 participants in total and seven project ideas reaching the incubation stage. The engagement ENA received over its roadmap was hugely beneficial and is helping to shape ARENA's distributed energy strategy.

Many of the projects worked up through this process are still in the development pipeline and have been identified as addressing critical gaps in the current electricity transformation knowledge base.