MIT SLOAN SCHOOL OF MANAGEMENT

SUSTAINABLE BUSINESS LAB
(S-LAB)
SPRING 2012

To Prospective S-Lab Host Companies:

Thank you for your interest in the MIT Sloan Sustainable Business Laboratory (known as S-Lab). This letter will give you a brief overview of S-Lab and the value we believe our S-Lab teams can deliver to host organizations.

We believe that sustainability offers new opportunities to transform markets, systems, and countries, and that there are many opportunities for firms and organizations to improve their performance while playing a positive role in the regeneration of the planet and the support of human health and welfare. We define sustainability broadly to include economic development, social equity, and environmental regeneration at all levels, from the individual to organizations, communities, regions, nations, and the world as a whole.

S-Lab is a project-intensive class that integrates classroom learning with a real-world team project focusing on effective sustainability activities by organizations. S-Lab is taught in conjunction with the course “Strategies for Sustainable Business”, which examines the challenges, concepts, and emerging practices for sustainability in business. The goals of these courses are to build knowledge and awareness, provide tools, and provide the students with hands-on experiences.

S-Lab project teams work from MIT on short, intensive projects that address the problems or opportunities for host organizations and advance the field as a whole. Teams of graduate students work with host organizations on specific sustainability-related projects. Host organizations, which can include large or small companies, non-profit institutions, and government agencies, set the project focus and negotiate with their student teams on the scope, schedule and deliverables. Past projects have provided high value to the host organizations in developing new tools or approaches, structuring new strategies for organizational sustainability, and assessing market opportunities. Examples of previous S-Lab final reports and presentations are available electronically at http://actionlearning.mit.edu/s-lab/

LOGISTICS AND SCHEDULE

Each S-Lab team will have approximately four (4) graduate students, drawn from the MIT Sloan School of Management MBA and Fellows Programs, and departments across MIT including the Schools of Engineering, Science, Architecture and Planning, Humanities, and the Media Lab, as well as from MIT programs such as Technology and Policy, Systems Design and Manufacturing (SDM), and Leaders for Global Operations (LGO).

The students form their teams to build a strong mix of skills and experience, and these teams select their top three choices of specific projects. Based on the interests and capabilities of the teams, the faculty then matches the team with a host organization, and the host organization then decides whether to accept the team. (Note: Host organizations that do not accept a matched team cannot be guaranteed another team match this semester. Not all host organizations may be matched to a student team.)
The student teams will meet weekly as a class, and also work in teams at least one day per week. Most teams establish a weekly conference call or, for a local host, on-site meetings, with the host organization.

**S-Lab Schedule:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>Fall 2011</td>
<td>Draft S-Lab Project Proposals due from Host Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 16, 2011</td>
<td>Final S-Lab Project Proposals due from Host Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 7, 2012</td>
<td>&quot;Strategies for Sustainable Business&quot; class begins, with S-Lab project proposals posted.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Late February 2012</td>
<td>Team/Host Match. Host Organizations contacted to review the skills and capabilities of the team and accept matched team. Student teams talk with host organizations to establish scope and schedule, obtain relevant information and/or data from the host organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 16, 2012</td>
<td>Work plans due. Teams and host organizations jointly agree to a detailed work plan for the April-May work period.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2, 2012</td>
<td>S-Lab Begins. Student teams start work on the project.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wk of May 7, 2012</td>
<td>Draft Final Report sent to host organization for review and comments</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wk of May 14, 2012</td>
<td>S-Lab Poster Day, where student present their S-Lab projects to the MIT community, host organizations, and sustainable business community.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wk of May 14, 2012</td>
<td>Final Reports are delivered to host organizations.</td>
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**PROJECT TOPICS**

We have found that many organizations address the opportunities for sustainability within the following framework of *Areas of Influence*:

- **HOW** organizations function – Sustainable Operations, specifically improving the sustainability of their facilities and infrastructure, operations, and supply chain.
- **WHAT** organizations provide – Sustainable Product/Service, specifically modifying existing or developing new sustainable services or products, and addressing the end-of-life aspects of their products.
- **WHERE** organizations operate – Sustainable Communities, specifically aiding in strengthening and developing sustainable communities in which they operate or from which they obtain resources (also known as “working outside the fence line”) in social, financial, commercial, environmental and political systems.

We are interested in an S-Lab project with your organization that addresses one of these “Areas of Influence.”

**HOST ORGANIZATION OBLIGATIONS**

Host organizations receive optimal results when the CEO and senior management spend focused time and energy on the project and with the team. This is especially true during the weekly conference calls and when the teams are on-site. *Please seriously assess the ability of your company’s senior management to commit the time necessary to gain maximum benefit from an S-Lab team.*

**NOTE:** Host organizations do not pay the students any salary or compensation. (MIT policy prohibits full-time students from receiving compensation for course-related work.) Thus, there is no cost to host companies for the project teams, but the host organization is expected to cover travel and lodging costs for any travel to the host organization’s office(s) or other approved project trips.
NEXT STEPS
If you would like to host a student team for the Spring 2012 S-Lab, please log into our website and fill out our brief questionnaire: http://actionlearning.mit.edu/s-lab/apply. The questionnaire provides critical information that will be used by S-Lab student teams to shape their team project preferences and by the faculty to generate the best match among teams and host companies. Your organization’s questionnaire will be posted, along with all the others that are submitted, on an MIT website restricted to S-Lab students. Please take the time to thoughtfully describe your organization and the project, so that students can fully appreciate the opportunity.

In framing your project, please think of the S-Lab team as working on a short (approximately 6 weeks) but intensive project with your company. At the end of the team project, teams formally present their conclusions to senior management, and deliver written reports and backup data detailing their analysis. Many host organizations have built upon S-Lab project results using summer interns or additional project proposals.

If you have any questions or need any clarifications regarding S-Lab or the questionnaire, please feel free to contact Prof. Jason Jay, S-Lab coordinator, at jjay@mit.edu or at 617-253-0594.

Please send your completed questionnaire at your earliest convenience. Final Proposals are due no later than December 16, 2011.

On behalf of the students of S-Lab, we look forward to working with you and your organization this coming spring.

Very truly yours,
Dr. Jason Jay (course coordinator)
Prof. Richard Locke
Prof. Matthew Amengual
Prof. John Sterman