



2025 STRATEGY

THE WORLD WE FACE



People around the globe are struggling to find their way in a world teeming with opposing forces. Power is both consolidating and diffusing, allowing authoritarian governments and other influential actors to assert greater control while also enabling the rise of new leaders and social movements. Burgeoning youth populations unleash new energy and potential while challenging the societies that must engage and employ them. Citizens have unprecedented access to knowledge but are inundated with misinformation and disinformation. Advances in education and innovation are expanding economic opportunities but the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to increase gaps between rich and poor, and increased automation could further disrupt the future of work. The legitimacy of longstanding institutions across public, private, and nonprofit sectors is crumbling. Yet people are also reimagining education, civic, media, technology, and government institutions in order to better serve public interests. Many societies are becoming more diverse and expanding opportunities to people from different backgrounds. They also confront persistent social inequities, racism, and intolerance. Public trust and social cohesion are eroding. But some citizens are standing up, pulling together, and demanding that societies become more inclusive, prosperous, cohesive, and equitable.

Technology is amplifying these trends. People have unprecedented access to information but don't know what to trust. Governments are able to serve their citizens more transparently and efficiently, but also have access to new tools of surveillance, manipulation, and oppression. Technology is unleashing stunning breakthroughs and allowing people to work and study seamlessly from anywhere in the world. It is also driving inequities between those able to pursue employment, education, and civic engagement online and those who cannot. It is driving debates about whether technological advances will destroy far more jobs than they create. People have extraordinary new opportunities to connect and unite – or divide and spread hate.

To reap the full rewards of these trends, and prevent their worst repercussions, people need the skills, knowledge, empathy, and resilience not only to adapt, but to drive changes in ways that benefit humanity. Institutions need to harness the power of technology to serve the public good and defend against harm. Societies need to ensure that technology accelerates the journey to both economic prosperity and social justice.

Other forces are exacerbating these trends, too: Climate change and extreme weather, systemic racism, the extended repercussions of the coronavirus pandemic, violent conflict, demographic shifts, a massive movement of people within and across borders, shrinking space for civic engagement due to weakened democratic institutions and rising authoritarianism, and spreading populism and citizen unrest are all stressing societies globally. These developments will shape both our work and the environment in which we and our partners operate. They demand urgent solutions that help people and institutions not only adapt to change but also overcome divisions and address challenges proactively and cooperatively.

At IREX we believe the future hinges on people, their potential, and their humanity

How can we promote more just, prosperous, and inclusive societies under these turbulent conditions? We believe our shared future depends on the ability of people and institutions to adapt and thrive amidst change – whether that change is caused by a global health crisis, political volatility, economic disruption, climate change, breakthrough innovations, or social upheaval. It requires people who engage constructively in the civic arena and institutions that are better equipped to manage uncertainty and serve the public good. It depends on the ability of individuals, institutions, communities, and whole societies to rebuild trust at a time of division. It depends on people who understand not just how to navigate this contested world but how to amplify what is good.



DRAWING ON MORE THAN 50 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE, WE CONCLUDE THAT IF IREX AND OUR PARTNERS GLOBALLY



CULTIVATE LEADERS who are ethical and committed to serving the public good



INVEST IN YOUTH AND SUPPORT THEIR EFFORTS to build a better future for their families and their communities



WORK WITH INSTITUTIONS to help them become more effective, responsive, accountable, and inclusive in serving the public good



EXTEND ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION, TRAINING, INFORMATION, AND MEDIA so people are better prepared for meaningful civic participation and the 21st century workforce



ACCELERATE THE ABILITY OF COMMUNITIES TO SOLVE PROBLEMS collectively and hold themselves and their leaders accountable



PROMOTE UNDERSTANDING AND TOLERANCE to bridge divides



CONTRIBUTE TO BUILDING SOCIAL TRUST AND GIVING PEOPLE HOPE

the world will be more just, prosperous, and inclusive. More people in more places will thrive.

IREX'S MISSION

To promote a more just, prosperous, and inclusive world, IREX and its partners invest in youth, cultivate leaders, strengthen institutions, and extend access to quality education and information.





CULTIVATE DYNAMIC LEADERS AT ALL LEVELS OF SOCIETY WHO BRIDGE DIVIDES AND DRIVE POSITIVE SOCIAL CHANGE

TO DO THIS WE WILL

- **BUILD A DIVERSE GLOBAL NETWORK OF ETHICAL AND CIVIC-MINDED LEADERS** with enhanced abilities to take action and inspire others to act
- **IMPROVE THE SKILLS, KNOWLEDGE, NETWORKS, AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES OF AT LEAST 100,000 LEADERS** to serve ethically and effectively in institutions that serve the public good
- **SUPPORT THESE LEADERS BY PROVIDING OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN, PRACTICE, AND REFLECT** through educational and professional experiences
- **EQUIP LEADERS TO MAKE SOUND DECISIONS** based on evidence and data
- **EMPOWER LEADERS TO INCORPORATE PARTICIPATORY AND INCLUSIVE APPROACHES** into initiatives and institutions they steward
- **PREPARE LEADERS TO NAVIGATE CHALLENGING AND EVEN DANGEROUS ENVIRONMENTS** while mitigating risk to themselves and others
- **FURTHER DEVELOP AND TEST METHODOLOGIES** to select high potential leaders, including those from diverse and underrepresented communities
- **CONTRIBUTE TO GROWING THE NUMBER OF LEADERS FROM DIVERSE BACKGROUNDS** by equipping at least 50,000 people — representing varied age cohorts; gender identities; racial, ethnic, and indigenous groups; abilities; faith traditions; and sexual orientations — with the skills, knowledge, networks, and experience necessary to drive positive social change

WE MUST LEARN

What types of skills, knowledge, networks, and professional experiences best position leaders to contribute to more just, prosperous, and inclusive societies?



WE WILL EVALUATE PROGRESS BY



Documenting how leaders supported by IREX adopt behavior changes that promote more just, prosperous, and inclusive societies



Measuring which types of support are most effective in cultivating dynamic and effective leaders who build trust, serve others effectively, and mobilize others to act



Showing how leaders who participate in IREX programs demonstrate more effective leadership than those who have not participated



Finalizing an evaluation framework to assess the impact of IREX's leadership development work consistently over time



ENGAGE YOUTH TO STRENGTHEN THEIR LEADERSHIP SKILLS, WORKFORCE READINESS, AND CIVIC PARTICIPATION

TO DO THIS WE WILL

- **SUPPORT 100,000 YOUTH** by improving their leadership skills, education and training, professional skills and experience, and life skills
- **STRENGTHEN LINKAGES** between educational institutions, government, private sector employers, and other stakeholders to ensure education and training prepare youth for employment
- **SUPPORT NONFORMAL EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS** such as libraries, youth centers, community centers, technical and vocational centers, and contribute online resources to provide lifelong education and training
- **DEVELOP RESOURCES TO SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS' EFFORTS TO BE MORE RESPONSIVE TO YOUTH**, particularly those from underserved populations
- **BRIDGE DIVIDES AND PROMOTE TOLERANCE** by expanding access to in-person and virtual exchange programs

WE MUST LEARN

How can existing institutions better prepare large youth populations for employment, effectively and sustainably, across different contexts?



WE WILL EVALUATE PROGRESS BY



Documenting how at least 1,000 institutions provide more relevant workforce skills for youth



Demonstrating with data that at least 75% of IREX program participants show greater success in gaining employment than their peers



Developing an evaluation framework to assess the impact of IREX's youth work consistently over time



Documenting how youth in IREX programs change attitudes and behaviors to reflect greater tolerance and understanding of other groups



SUPPORT INSTITUTIONS TO BECOME MORE EFFECTIVE, ADAPTABLE, ACCOUNTABLE, AND EQUITABLE IN SERVING THE PUBLIC GOOD

TO DO THIS WE WILL

- **BOLSTER EFFORTS BY PUBLIC-SERVING INSTITUTIONS** striving to effectively engage underserved populations
- **STRENGTHEN THE CAPACITY OF PUBLIC AND CIVIC INSTITUTIONS TO USE DATA AND EVIDENCE** to more effectively develop policies, provide services, achieve desired outcomes, and enhance transparency and accountability to constituents
- **INCREASE CITIZENS' TRUST IN INSTITUTIONS** that serve the public good in communities where IREX works
- **BUILD THE CAPABILITIES OF AT LEAST 5,000 INSTITUTIONS** to achieve their missions more effectively, accountably, and inclusively in order to better serve the public good
- **SUPPORT EFFORTS TO DECENTRALIZE AUTHORITY** effectively by strengthening the capacity of local organizations to deliver better quality services to their populations and build trust in governing institutions
- **ASSIST AT LEAST 500 INSTITUTIONS ENGAGED IN DECENTRALIZATION REFORM EFFORTS**

WE MUST LEARN

Are inclusive institutions demonstrably more effective at serving marginalized populations and building public trust?



WE WILL EVALUATE PROGRESS BY



Publishing an IREX approach to strengthening institutions and developing an evaluation framework to assess the impact of IREX’s institution-strengthening work consistently over time



Documenting that IREX institutional partners build trust among key stakeholders



Documenting how public and civic institutions use data and evidence to achieve their missions more effectively



Demonstrating with data that at least 60% of IREX-supported institutions in the public sector and civil society change their policies, procedures, and practices to be more effective, accountable, and equitable



BROADEN ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION AND PUBLIC INFORMATION IN ORDER TO EQUIP CITIZENS TO SUCCESSFULLY NAVIGATE UNCERTAINTY, COMPLEXITY, AND CHANGE

TO DO THIS WE WILL

- **PROVIDE CITIZENS, AND ESPECIALLY YOUTH, WITH ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION** and training, professional skills and experience, and life skills
- **EXPAND ACCESS TO QUALITY REPORTING AND DIVERSE VIEWS** by training journalists and building the capacity of media outlets and supporting institutions
- **PREPARE MORE THAN TEN MILLION INDIVIDUALS TO CONSUME INFORMATION MORE CRITICALLY**, identify and analyze false information, and demonstrate changed behaviors such as cross-checking news and not sharing disinformation
- **EQUIP AT LEAST 10,000 TEACHERS** to incorporate problem-based learning, critical thinking, cross-cultural communications, teamwork, and self-management into their classrooms
- **EXPAND ACCESS TO EDUCATION AND EXPERIENCES THAT IMPROVE CROSS-CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING** and the ability to work cooperatively with diverse groups of people locally and globally
- **MEASURE THE HEALTH OF INFORMATION ECOSYSTEMS** through the development of new resources
- **BUILD CITIZEN RESILIENCE TO DISINFORMATION** through robust initiatives in significantly more communities and countries
- **INCREASE THE PHYSICAL SAFETY, DIGITAL SECURITY, AND PSYCHOSOCIAL WELL-BEING OF JOURNALISTS** and social communicators operating in restricted or challenging environments around the world

WE MUST LEARN

What types of media literacy and critical thinking skills lead to the most sustained behavior change, across different demographic groups and social contexts, in people's consumption of information?



WE WILL EVALUATE PROGRESS BY



Developing and testing methodologies to maximize individuals' ability to identify and analyze false information over the long term



Deploying an evaluation framework to assess consistently over time the impact of IREX's work on behavior change related to media and information consumption



Showing with data that at least 25,000 schools have committed to integrating information literacy into their curricula



Demonstrating that IREX-supported journalists and social communicators produce high quality content in ways that minimize risk to themselves and their sources



Documenting changes in the number and reach of independent and financially resilient media outlets



Demonstrating with data that at least 75% of educators trained by IREX incorporate more effective curricula and methods into their teaching practice



Showing with data increased citizen demand for quality news and diverse perspectives as a result of IREX programming

CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES

**TO ACHIEVE THESE OBJECTIVES MORE EFFECTIVELY,
IREX COMMITS TO FOUR CROSS-CUTTING PRIORITIES:**

ELEVATE DATA AND EVIDENCE:

IREX believes in using evidence and data to learn, iterate, and improve outcomes. We will deepen this commitment by

- Integrating evidence and data more systematically into everything we do and leveraging data even more effectively to inform programming, iterate, innovate, and measure behavior and attitude change
- Developing new programs to help participants leverage data and evidence to make better decisions and serve others
- Building staff capacity across IREX to utilize data and evidence more effectively

BUILD CUTTING-EDGE EXPERTISE:

The global proliferation of talent, high-performing organizations, and local ownership is a positive development that IREX embraces. We recognize that our role changes in a world of highly capable local actors. Now, we must bring world-class expertise, a global perspective, and an ability to marry knowledge with action in order to add distinctive value. We will continue to do this by

- Strengthening cutting-edge expertise in priority areas such as fighting disinformation, improving employment prospects for youth, developing leaders, and building social cohesion
- Producing quality research that informs action
- Partnering with universities and research institutions to close the gap between thinkers and doers, speed innovation, and achieve improved results
- Sharing IREX expertise and tested solutions more broadly to enhance impact
- Expanding efforts by IREX staff to develop specialized expertise relevant to IREX's mission

ADVANCE DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION:

IREX is committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in our organization and in our work. We will deepen this commitment by

- Increasing representation by and retention and promotion of people from different genders and a diverse range of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, geographic, and religious backgrounds, particularly in management and leadership positions
- Enhancing our commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion and anti-racist outcomes across phases of program management: program design; recruitment of participants; staffing; program content; and monitoring, evaluation, and learning
- Advancing organizational practices that contribute to diversity, equity, and inclusion such as requiring training for all staff, completing efforts to standardize and centralize recruitment, expanding procurement opportunities to a more diverse set of suppliers, and developing concrete metrics to hold ourselves accountable

ACCELERATE LOCAL SOLUTIONS:

IREX has long believed in deep, respectful partnerships with local and regional partners who are most knowledgeable about the context and best positioned to drive and sustain positive change. We will deepen and adapt this commitment to a new era by

- Growing the size and impact of a global community of changemakers
- Testing and refining efforts to expand opportunities to women, girls, and other underserved populations across contexts and geographies
- Advancing efforts to learn from, support, and proliferate effective, cost-effective, locally-led, and sustainable solutions
- Continuing to support national and local governments, helping them to become more capable, efficient, responsive, inclusive, and better-resourced as they serve the public good
- Continuing IREX's long history of supporting national and local reform and decentralization efforts, particularly in countries undergoing large-scale transitions

WHAT IREX DELIVERS



PEOPLE-CENTERED FOCUS

We put people at the heart of everything we do and treat partners with dignity, respect, empathy, and a genuine spirit of collaboration.



COMPLEXITY AND SCALE

We excel at managing complex, large-scale programs and navigating challenging circumstances.



HOLISTIC APPROACH

We work with partners to design, adapt, and implement comprehensive approaches that integrate a focus on people, institutions, communities, and social systems.



TRUSTED PARTNER AND CONVENER

We are a reliable and sought-after partner with demonstrated success at working across divides and bringing together diverse stakeholders to achieve shared goals.



COMMITMENT TO EVIDENCE

We leverage data and evidence to design, iterate, and strengthen program quality and operational excellence.



COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

We foster diversity and inclusion at all levels of society and strive to infuse gender equity and social inclusion into everything we do.



PROVEN RESULTS

We pride ourselves on more than fifty years of tested solutions, innovation, and thought leadership that change how individuals, institutions, and social systems operate.

ABOUT IREX

A nonprofit organization committed to international education and development, IREX has embraced a people-centered approach since 1968. Our organization was created to bridge geopolitical divides by fostering the exchange of scholars, teachers, students, and ideas. IREX then built on our expertise and network of relationships in Eurasia to support people building bridges between societies, driving educational reform, leading newly empowered movements in civil society, and building effective and accountable governance. IREX became a leader in improving access to information technology, strengthening independent media, and empowering youth through education and leadership development. As global needs shifted, IREX brought this expertise to new regions: first Asia, then the Middle East and Africa, then Latin America. Throughout these decades of change, our focus on people and communities has been steady. We have nurtured a distinctive approach combining caring and efficacy.



JOIN US

At IREX we believe that a better world is possible. We want to ally with partners around the world – like you – to provide more opportunities for more people. We want to support those who fight injustice and stand up for what is right. We want to join with others to build a movement for understanding, tolerance, and hope. Please, join us in promoting more just, prosperous, and inclusive societies worldwide.



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